DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 145 359 CG 011 913

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TITLE School and Community: Partners in Problem Solving.
INSTITUTION Center for New Schools, Inc., Chicago, Ill.
SPONS AGENCY Illinois State Office of Education, Springfield.
PUB DATE [76]
NOTE 112p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$6.01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Board of Education Role; *Community Involvement; Decision Making; Elementary Secondary Education; Models; *Needs Assessment; *Parent Participation; *Parent School Relationship; *Problem Solving; *Public School Systems

ABSTRACT

Center for New Schools (CNS) worked with the Illinois Office of Education to develop this guide for informing educational professionals and citizens interested in educational improvement concerning ways to carry out local problem solving in their schools. The guide focuses especially on parent involvement in the process of problem solving. Several examples are described, primarily from urban settings, but the dynamics and principles are applicable in other settings. (Author/CKJ)

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SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

Partners in Problem-Solving

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Through a contract funded by

ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
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Joseph M. Cronin, State Superintendent of Education

FOREWORD

Illinois citizens, as well as many throughout the nation, have come to realize that schools and schooling are not the private domain of students and professional educators. We have become increasingly aware that improving education means the involvement of parents and the community as well as teachers and administrators.

Many school districts in Illinois have already developed new approaches to actively involve their citizens in the activities and problems of the schools, for they understand that lasting change cannot be made without help and support from the community.

This handbook, Joint Partners in Problem Solving, draws together these approaches as well as successful activities from other states. The activities and suggestions in the handbook are as relevant for communities of 500 as they are for cities of 5 million.

It is important that we work together for Illinois school children, and "Joint Partners" can start us thinking of new ways. Together we can make it happen.

Joseph M. Cronin
State Superintendent of Education

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PREFACE

Center for New Schools (CNS) worked closely with the Illinois Office of Education, Urban and Ethnic Education Section, in developing the idea for a publication "that can be used in informing educational professionals and citizens interested in educational improvement concerning ways that they can carry out the local problem-solving approach in their own schools."[1] As we set about the task of writing this piece, it became clear that a relatively brief booklet such as this could not effectively be a complete, how-to-do-it book on the topic of joint problem solving. Rather, it can best serve to introduce the reader to the topic, to give some concrete examples from across the country of joint problem solving in action, and to provide suggestions for additional resources to aid those involved in or embarking upon such a joint effort.

Further, it became clear that we could not deal with all aspects of joint problem solving at the school and community level. Therefore, we have chosen to focus especially on parent involvement in the joint problem solving process for several reasons. First, parents and community members are often the least involved segment of the school community in efforts to effect change and improve educational opportunities for children. Second, more and more administrators and teachers are recognizing that parent involvement can serve to enhance local educational improvement efforts. When parents and other community members have an opportunity to voice

their concerns, see their concerns addressed in the schools, and lend their energy and talent to improving education, chances for the success of such efforts are greatly improved. Third, as schools seek to respond to the cultural values of the community and the individual needs of each child, parents and community members become increasingly valuable resources for the learning program.

Most of the examples described here are in urban settings. The dynamics and principles involved, however, are applicable in varying forms in all settings -- urban, suburban, small town, and rural. We leave it to the reader's creativity and resourcefulness to make the practical adaptation and application of these ideas, and to seek new ones.

An undertaking such as this which seeks to pull together a wide variety of experiences and resources has required the involvement of many individuals and groups. We owe great thanks to all. The following people have contributed to this booklet: Margaret Carter, consultant to CNS, wrote the basic text of the handbook and created the cover design. Donald Moore and Kathy Blair of CNS provided content and format editing support. Other CNS staff who helped gather information, ideas, and materials for the booklet are Deborah Baldwin, Claire Fund, Frances Holliday, Ularsee Menar, Sharon Weitzman, Stephen Wilson, and Thomas Wilson. Eva Diaz typed the bulk of the manuscript. Rita Dee of the Illinois Office of

Education has worked closely with CNS throughout the conceptualization, writing, and revising of the booklet.

CNS has drawn extensively on its experience in conducting research on joint problem-solving and local education improvement efforts, and on providing technical assistance to school communities involved in such efforts. Specific CNS projects which provided input are: "Documentation and Technical Assistance in Urban Schools: A Study of School Problem-Solving," National Institute of Education Contract #400-75-0018; "Technical Assistance Strategies of Five Educational Linking Organizations," NIE Grant #NE-G-74-0050; "Experience-Based Urban School Community Improvement Program," supported by grants from the Joyce Foundation; "Legal Accountability of Public School Educators for Providing a Minimum Standard of Professional Services," NIE Grant #NE-G-00-3-0145; and "Cooperative Study of Community-Based Learning," supported by grants from the Carnegie Corporation.

Special thanks go those groups and individuals who gave us information related to the examples used and who permitted us to describe their work: Car Foster, Roosevelt Elementary School; Preston Wilcox and Jim Wilks, Afram Associates; Joyce Clark, Higher Education Guidance Center; Evelina Antonetty, Mattie Faulk, and Lorraine Montenegro, United Bronx Parents; Mirium Thompson, Advocates for Children of New York; Hayes Mizel, South Carolina Community Relations Program; Augusta Strowder and Betty Lampland, Saint Paul

Open School; Lillian Weber, Workshop Center for Open Education; Ben Williams and Dick Johnson, National College of Education; and Walter Lewis, Urban Education Project.

Finally, the initial draft of the booklet was reviewed by many individuals who contributed to the final product. Reviewers included most of the individuals previously mentioned, as well as: Barbara Harrison, Manford Holmes, Chitra Karunakaran, Yvonne King, Terry Lenoir, Adelmo Lopez, Obed Lopez, Teresa Maldonado, Sylvia Smith, Barbara Stewart, and Carol Taylor of CNS; staff members of the Illinois Office of Education; Adrienne Y. Bailey of The Chicago Community Trust and the Illinois State Board of Education; Gwen Cosby, chairperson of the Parent of Education Council of Chicago's District 21; Guadalupe Hamersma, head teacher at the St. Vitus branch of Chicago's Jirka School; Shirley Lyttle, president of Chicago's Cuffe School PTA; Walter Pilditch, principal of Chicago's Jungman School; and Camille Roby, principal of Cuffe School.

INTRODUCTION: PARENTS AS PARTNERS IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Since we believe that parents, teachers, administrators, students, and other citizens are interested in working together in practical ways to improve schools,

Since we believe that people trying to improve the schools can most effectively build on the lessons of other people's past efforts to change the schools,

Since we believe that the individual needs of students must be met through learning programs that fit their own unique qualities as people,

This handbook has been written.

Who Is This Handbook For?

There is a growing recognition among many people whose lives are touched by our public schools that we need a new approach to solving school problems, a way to improve our schools that relies on the full resources of the local school community and every other helpful person or organization who wants to pitch in. Energy to mobilize the total resources of our communities for the benefit of our children can come from many directions:

1. Parent and community leaders who want to see better education for their children.

2. Principals who want to spend less time filling out forms and more time working directly with teachers and parents.

3. Teachers who want to mobilize the efforts of their fellow teachers, their students, and their parents in developing school programs that work in their classrooms.

4. District superintendents who want to see the full resources of their districts used to ensure that each child's educational needs are being met.

5. Social agency staff from community centers, mental health centers, and recreation programs who feel that basic improvement of local schools is key to the effectiveness of their own work.

6. University professors who want to bridge the gap between good ideas and the realities of today's schools.

7. School district curriculum specialists and other central office staff who want to provide concrete help to local schools in developing programs consistent with the cultural values of the community and the everyday experiences of the children.

8. State and regional school departments who want to play a direct, vital role in changing schools.

This book then is directed at a wide variety of people who want to work in a practical, sustained way as agents of change to improve urban schools. For these concerned people, we describe a method for improving our schools called *joint problem solving*.

What Is the Joint Problem-Solving Approach to School Improvement?

The joint problem-solving approach is based on two important ideas that have received much support in the experience and the educational research of the past 10 years:

1. Solutions to school problems cannot be imposed on the local school community -- they must be tailored to fit the local situation and they must be planned and carried out with intensive participation at the school and neighborhood level.

2. School staff cannot do it alone. Improving schools must mobilize the efforts of parents, students,

teachers, administrators, and other local citizens as resources for better education.

Joint problem-soving is based on a vision of how the school and the community can work together in the interests of children:

-- The school community is a human system of parents, students, teachers, administrators, and others who are vigorously engaged in making important decisions and solving school problems, with the participation of none being either fringe or symbolic.

-- All agree that carrying out a sound educational program is a joint, multifaceted responsibility and that the finest systems of communication are needed so that ideas and information flow through a network of easy-to-understand language and behavior.

-- All members of the school community regularly assess school needs. They are open-minded as they seek and receive help from all available quarters in addressing these needs. They advocate and accept necessary change as an index of life and growth.

-- The rights and responsibilities of parents, teachers, students, administrators, and others involved in improving the schools are clearly established and respected, based on a mutual commitment to serve the best interests of children.

To whatever degree this sounds like your school community or the hopes you have for it, you are either in the process of joint problem solving, or ready to begin.

How Has the Joint Problem-Solving Approach Grown Up in the Last Ten Years?

The past decade has involved an unprecedented effort to make

public schools, particularly those in urban areas, more effective. Billions of dollars have been given to local school districts to encourage them to change. More billions have been pumped into basic research and the development of new school books, teaching machines, and thousands of ideas for improving schools. Yet researchers who have taken a hard look at the results find them disappointing. Reading achievement -- the target of many programs -- has usually changed little.[2] And research has uncovered many examples of schools that adopt new slogans and new programs on paper, but change little in the way they work with students day-to-day.[3]

It is hard to believe that it's wrong to put more money into the schools. With money, you can pay for extra staff, special services, and new materials. However, some are beginning to suggest that there is nothing wrong with what money can do, but there <u>is</u> something wrong with the way the money has been given out. Most of the time, funds for new programs for local schools came in a package conceived and wrapped up far from the realities of public schools and neighborhoods. With little involvement in planning these programs, local school staff and communities have little commitment to carrying them out. With programs coming from outside that did not fit the local situation, local people tended to ignore them.

There is reason for greater hope, however, in another approach

to problem solving, one that rises in some ways from the failures of mass funding attempts and pre-packaged solutions. A major study of the federal government's efforts to improve the schools has shown that perhaps the most critical element in determining the success or failure of these efforts to improve local schools is the involvement of people at the school and neighborhood level in actively planning them and modifying them to fit their local situation.[4] And this job of local involvement works best when the community as well as the school staff is involved. Again, ten years of educational research have shown the decisive impact that parents can have on the quality of education their children receive, through their active involvement in the school. In a recent study of reading achievement in Los Angeles, for example, the students who achieved the most were those whose parents had regular contact and involvement with their children's teachers.[5] More recently, the Grant Elementary School in Chicago started a special program for intensive parent-teacher cooperation, and students in the program gained twice as much in reading as students whose parents and teachers were not involved.[6]

More and more evidence is pointing to the promise of this joint problem-solving approach in our local schools and neighborhoods. There are efforts all over the country that have successfully brought together members of the school community -- parents, teachers, administrators, students, and other citizens -- to

identify their local school's problems and needs, and then to develop strategies for solutions. Sometimes the need was for more money. Sometimes the need was for understanding and coalitions that money could not buy. More and more, we see such groups maintaining their strength as agents for change in local schools, and even growing to deal with other problems in the community such as health or housing.

What Can You Learn About the Joint Problem-Solving Approach That Will Help You Apply It in Your Local Schools?

The essence of the joint problem-solving method is that there is not a magic formula that will bring across-the-board improvement in our schools. Each school community must assess its own strengths and weaknesses and develop its own resources and strategies. There can be no cookbook for joint problem solving. However, you can still learn a lot from the experiences of others who have tried it. You can look at accounts of their experiences to decide what to take from them that fits your own situation. You can see some patterns that run through their experiences that suggest what might work in your school; what sounds good but doesn't seem to work out in practice; what stumbling blocks seem to be present everywhere when people try to turn good ideas into workable programs.

How Is This Handbook Organized?

We have organized this handbook to reflect the philosophy

that you can learn from others -- not in a mechanical way, but by thoughtfully looking at the patterns in other people's experiences to see how they fit your own school. We have studied the efforts of dozens of groups trying to improve local schools through joint problem solving to find common problems and ways to deal with them -- *critical activities* we call them. We have identified four critical activities that seem central to involving the school community in joint problem solving:

1. Coming Together
2. Looking Around/Assessing Needs
3. Making Things Happen
4. Sustaining Involvement/Modifying Efforts

For each activity, we present some concrete examples of how people have gotten things done, and we analyze some issues that seem to come up again and again in carrying out each one. All the examples presented are taken from actual situations. In some instances, however, we have changed the names of groups, individuals, and locales. Ideally, we want you to be able to touch the reality of what each example means and also to see some of the underlying issues. But a short handbook covering such a broad topic can only scratch the surface.

Following each of these four critical activities, we describe some of the best resources we've found -- books, articles, materials, and organizations -- that can help you dig deeper into the issues

involved in specific aspects of joint problem solving. We have limited ourselves to clearly written materials that give concrete, practical advice. They were chosen because, in most cases, people involved in joint problem solving vouched for their usefulness. Use them! The ideas, the cautions, the check lists, the procedures they contain will allow you to conserve the precious energy you have.

Finally, throughout the handbook we have focused on ways to strengthen the parent role in joint problem solving, since it is parents who tend to have the smallest role in operating and improving schools at present. Yet, involving parents and community in joint efforts to improve education can contribute greatly to helping schools meet the needs of each child.

1. COMING TOGETHER

Almost by definition, the first step in joint problem-solving is "coming together"--building an initial foundation for cooperative action. Sometimes, it means that a group of parents is angry about the loss of a special program in the school due to budget cuts. Or a group of teachers develops a plan for a new reading program and seeks parent support and involvement. Or a school principal reaches out to involve the community as classroom volunteers. Or a school district human relations specialist or a local community service center brings school staff and community together to discuss problems. The coming together of parents as part of this process is often key, since they are usually the least organized group. Coming together is seldom smooth--any basic change involves some stress and conflict. But school communities have repeatedly found that if they can struggle through to a point where everyone is given a real stake in decision making and problem solving, the result is most often a great release of positive and creative energy.

Examples

Neighborhood School Boards: Community and School Come Together to Make Decisions

My name is Bess Capehart. I am a member of the Roosevelt Neighborhood School Board. There are a lot of things I could tell you about my involvement and the involvement of other parents and of some of the people who don't even have children. The thing I consider most important, though, is the startling effect all this has had on how the children feel about school. I can talk on the subject, because my family really came in two stages. When the first three went through Roosevelt, I had little contact with the school. With these last three, I can say I've been in the school building as much as they. My oldest son told me recently, "Maybe if there had been a Neighborhood School Board when I was in school--maybe I would have liked school more. Somehow, I might have gone on to college."

When the Louisville, Kentucky, Board of Education moved to establish neighborhood school boards, many things began to happen at Roosevelt Elementary School. Roosevelt's principal, Dr. Car Foster, describes it this way:

"I was an organizational development specialist in the central office five years ago. We had just gotten a new superintendent--Newman Walker, a good man. We tried to do a lot to be change agents for the schools, but we made some mistakes. We did not, for instance, involve the community much. There were a lot of reasons for that bad decision, including lack of finances and lack of intuitiveness. We got shot down as a result, and realized that we had to open up to the people.

"The central office gave every school the right to

decentralize and to have a neighborhood school board. There were only three criteria to be met: (1) members had to be elected, (2) the majority of members had to be parents, (3) no state laws or statutes could be violated. The rest was up to the school community and its creativeness. That was in 1971 and 1972.

"I kept hearing principals say, 'It doesn't work. You can't get parents in. It won't work.' I didn't believe that. I applied for the position of principal of Roosevelt Elementary School and got the job. They already had a Neighborhood School Board, but it had done nothing. They had one teacher and three parents at the first meeting I attended. The parents kept saying:

> We're the only parents around here who ever do anything. You just can't get them to come out. They don't care what happens. We've tried and tried, but nobody wants to work. We're the only ones.

'Let's recruit.' I said. 'I don't even live in this neighborhood, but I will bring in one parent for the next meeting. Each of you should be able to do the same.' Two months later, we had eleven members.

"Since then, the role of parents in the school has grown steadily. Some sit on the neighborhood board. Some help teachers in the classroom. Some make materials for teachers. The board constantly reaches out to broaden the group of parents who are involved. Social events that parents enjoy are held regularly

and always include a little time to discuss the program of the school. There are many options for parents to get involved--people who don't like to sit through long board meetings can build equipment for the classrooms. Some who start by building equipment end up leading the meetings. The neighborhood board has now become Roosevelt Community Schools, Inc., and they are working on a wide range of community problems beyond the school."[7]

Parents as Owners, Not Tenants, of Their Children's Schools: Afram Associates

> *The question is not whether parents should be involved in the education of their children, the question is how have we convinced parents that they don't have an absolute right and responsibility to be involved? If my son broke his leg, would anyone try to stop me from deciding which doctor to take him to and to make sure he set it right? Well, how much more important is my child's mind than his leg? A broken leg can heal, but my child's mind, if it is broken, will never heal.*
> *--Rev. Jim Wilkes, Afram Associates*

Afram Associates was founded by four Black educators, all deeply involved in the effort to relate schools more closely to the communities they serve. Their work is based on the belief that:

> Parents/families have a natural non-negotiable right/responsibility to guard/protect the right of their children to be perceived as being human/educable, as being members of a family and as being members of a community and to be involved in shaping the content/policy of their (children's) educational programs. The failure of school systems to effectively provide educational justice to all children, shifts the

exercise of parental decision making from a right/ responsibility to an absolute necessity.
--Afram Associates[8]

Afram staff gained an opportunity to put these ideas into practice when they won a federal contract to work with eight communities as part of the Follow Through Program. Follow Through was an effort to provide supplementary help to schools with preschool programs--help that would enable those schools to continue to strengthen their educational programs from the preschool level through the early grades. The eight Follow Through sites that Afram assisted ranged from schools in rural communities to small and large cities. Afram hired and trained one parent in each school to act as a Local Stimulator for parent partnership in the schools. In their first contacts with parents, Afram staff always held meetings in parents' homes, not at school, because they felt parents talk more freely there. They trained and supported the parents to work for eight goals:

1. Belief System in the right/obligation/necessity of parents to be involved in educational affairs.
2. Parental Decision Making as a non-negotiable parental obligation.
3. Existence of Leadership Cadre: a group of experienced, informed parents who can act collectively in response to local will and interests.
4. An Extra-School Base of Operations: for conduct of business, keeping of records, holding meetings, and for community meeting needs when the school is closed.

5. Extra-School Leadership Opportunities/Exercise: ability of parent leadership to exercise communal leadership outside of the school organization on "non-educational" issues.

6. Access to Informal Channels of Influence and Power: ability to obtain priority information, to meet with school authorities informally--or in the community, etc.

7. Sense of Local Autonomy: a sense of ownership over the local town; and a sense of responsibility to review/meet local needs/interests first.

8. Application of a Problem-Solving Approach: the ability to research problems, to ask questions, to pose issues, etc.--and then, to act on the new-found information.

--Afram Action Stimulator #276 [9]

Afram began to work with different communities in light of local conditions. In one community where there was resistance to parents being actively involved in the school, coupled with a desperate economic situation, Afram brought parents together by organizing a food and clothing distribution center in the school for families in need. They also found that parents were interested in sewing classes and got them started in homes and at the school. Since parents operated both these programs at the local school, their experience gave them a feeling that the school was a part of the community and should respond to its needs.

A quite different school situation Afram assisted was the Highland Park Free School in the Roxbury section of Boston, a school formed by parents dissatisfied with the public schools.

In this setting, Afram worked with a group of parents already highly involved in their children's education. Afram assisted the Highland Park parents in more deeply examining what education could be for their children and what their philosophy was, particularly in light of African culture and heritage.

Highland Park Free School staffed each classroom with a certificated teacher and a parent who was a full co-teacher in the classroom. The school assessed that both the certified teacher and the parent co-teacher had their unique contribution to make to the learning program. Newsweek described the school as follows:

> Kids romp around bright, spacious rooms, feed a mini-zoo of animals, and investigate the attractively placed plants, rocks and shells. But the school's sense of identity and purpose is rigidly organized. The 200 children, 98 percent of them Black begin each day by reciting the school's principles in Swahili, including umoja (unity), nia (purpose), juumba (creativity) and imani (faith). To further emphasize the sense of blackness, the children in the upper school are divided not into grades but into four African "tribes." --Newsweek, April 23, 1971 [10]

Broadening the Base of Joint Problem-Solving: the Community Improvement Process

> *One of the fascinating things about life in this city is that there is an endless supply of interesting facts and stories which have never really been chronicled. No one ever told me, for instance, that the tannery section, which we always got to by crossing the Ninnaqua Street Bridge, is an island, a pretty big island at that. It interests me that those of us who grew up here, going to school, talked about the tannery section as being across the Mississippi River, not in it. It wasn't until I began my work with the Institute for Parent Involvement that I*

began a serious study of the tannery section, especially its two schools.

"The Institute for Parent Involvement is a 10-year-old federally funded organization developing models and implementing strategies to improve schools by getting entire neighborhoods involved. Those of us who were interns at the Institute developed a plan which we called the Community Improvement Process. We wanted to field test the process. After much discussion, we decided on the tannery section for a site. We were intrigued by the dual character of the community. It was at once geographically separate from, but at the same time part of, an urban area in Illinois. There were two schools, one elementary and one high school, with a total enrollment of just over 1000. The school was governed by a community school board, and most of its members were the white male executives from the tanneries. There was only one woman on the school board, and attendance at meetings was very poor.

"It was just by chance that we got into the tannery section. The superintendent, distressed about the do-nothing attitude of the board and the lack of interest of parents, often attended seminars at the nearby university hoping for a clue to something that would make things better. He was there one weekend when we spelled out the Community Improvement Process. He was looking for help and asked us to come explain the process to the community school board. They didn't quite understand it, but voted to

support it on the strong recommendation of the superintendent.

"The Community Improvement Process was based on some key assumptions such as:

1. Planned change is better than unplanned change.

2. The result of involving local citizens as well as teachers and administrators is that schools improve, and the entire community benefits. You cannot make good changes without a representative school-community group.

3. Everybody has a right to participate in making decisions that affect them.

4. Differences of opinion should not be avoided. It is better if they are out in the open so that all may participate in resolving differences.

5. A person outside the community and school system is needed to facilitate change.

"I was chosen by the Institute, in consultation with the superintendent, to be the process facilitator. In the tannery section, I spent time in the schools talking to the two principals, the teachers, and the students. We planned a series of social events in the high school gymnasium so that parents would meet me and get used to the idea that I was there to help them get started in the Community Improvement Process.

"We started by asking a number of people to serve as temporary school community representatives. It was their responsibility to determine the major opinion groups on the island and then canvass the community to get the names of various individuals who represented these groups. Using a telephone survey,

the temporary school community representatives identified 30 persons to form a permanent group. The school board O.K.'d the membership of the group. Student representatives were selected to reflect various age groups, economic backgrounds, and levels of academic achievement. Staff members from the elementary and high school each selected one representative. Parents and community people were chosen so that there was representation from the major community opinion groups: the young artists' colony, factory workers, university faculty, business people, and the public housing project residents. These people were invited to join the permanent School Community Representatives group, and most accepted."

Agencies Organize to Fill a Critical Need: Project COPE

The High Education Guidance Center is operated by the Chicago Board of Education to give intensive counseling services to students from 10 select high schools whose graduates have seemed to need special attention when the time came to think about college. The service has been so effective that students from all of the public high schools in the city, and some of the private and parochial schools, frequently call or visit the center to receive advice and counsel from Joyce Clark, the energetic director. Many admissions officers throughout the country are accustomed to her calls as she seeks information about placement for students who might just forget it all if it were not for this support system.

Clark was understandably alarmed when school closed sixteen

days early in the spring of 1976 and the summer school program was drastically reduced, due to a money crunch. This meant that those graduates who needed additional counseling services during the summer to insure their enrollment in the fall college corps would be handicapped. So much had been left undone.

The situation was critical, and Project COPE was conceived by Clark to meet the crisis. A number of community organizations and agencies responded to her call for help. Among them were the Ada S. McKinley Educational Services, the Chicago Urban League, the South End Jaycees, the League of United Latin American Citizens, and the Illinois State Scholarship Commission. All agreed to become a part of a network of co-sponsors of Project COPE.

Principals, teachers, parents and business persons agreed to volunteer their services at the counselor resource centers. There were 20 sites including 12 Urban Progress Centers, the Chicago Youth Centers, and the office of the Puerto Rican Congress.

The volunteers helped students to select a college or trade school, helped them fill out the application for admission, helped in finding financial aid, and provided general supportive counseling. A special A.C.T. assessment test, the one required by many colleges for admission, was arranged especially for Chicago students, and was given in August.

> Now that Project COPE is over, I have a feeling that it is really a beginning. Larry Hawkins, who has done a lot toward getting young people from poor communities into college, touched me on the shoulder. He suggested that what we had was an instant coalition--born of

itself and delivered of itself, all of its own need. Larry and I laughed about how the last thing we needed was another coalition, but I think (and I'm very serious here) that you can only hold back so much. If people feel a need, and if people think they can get together, organizations do happen.

--Joyce Clark

Patterns and Issues in Coming Together

The Louisville Neighborhood School Board, the work of Afram Associates, the Community Involvement Process, and Project COPE illustrate concretely many of the issues involved in bringing people together to solve problems jointly. From these and other examples we have analyzed, we see a number of patterns and problems that come up repeatedly. A change agent helping people come together should think about the following:

1. The coming together of groups that have remained active and effective over time always requires strong leadership, such as Clark of Project COPE, that can project a vision of what can be accomplished, twist people's arms to get work done and to take on unfamiliar tasks, and keep the various parts of the effort moving. However, most groups that last begin very early to develop more than just a single leader with a group of followers. The strongest efforts include three or four strong leaders and a constant attempt to develop new leadership rather than to keep people in a "follower" position.

2. People react most readily to immediate crises--the fight in the school, the early closing of school. But the danger of coming together on these types of crisis issues is that it is very difficult to maintain the work of the group after the immediate crisis ends--whether with a victory or a defeat. Groups that come together and stay together use crises to build their

organization but attempt to sustain it with an on-going set of activities (such as Afram's food and clothing program) to build a more permanent organization.

3. Groups that came together initially without some special funding were more likely to last than those established with a financial grant. They tended to see themselves as more independent and were more resourceful in solving problems when money was scarce. On the other hand, they tended to be successful in seeking money once they were established and in using various sources of income to the benefit of their program.

4. Efforts that later succeeded were aware of the full variety of resources available in the school, school district, and community to solve problems. Also, they were tied into these resources through a network of personal connections, so that they could be tapped at appropriate times for information, sources of funds, and political support. This awareness of the political and social dynamics involved in joint problem solving frequently proved relevant to other issues in the community such as housing and health care--areas traditionally considered to be distinct from education.

5. Most cooperative efforts have begun working first in the most responsive schools--schools where there was some cooperation between school and community--rather than tackling the most difficult situations first. Perhaps the most important single key to cooperation from the school is the attitude of the principal.

Principals interested in joint problem solving deserve strong support because of the crucial position they occupy in shaping opinions about the value of the school and community working in partnership.

6. Successful efforts to bring people together build on an understanding of the culture of the community. The Roosevelt Neighborhood School Board's use of popular social events and Afram's practice of meeting in homes are both examples of the way in which change agents can build on a knowledge of local attitudes and activities to increase the breadth of participation.

. Successful efforts make conscious attempts to go beyond the established leadership--the people who are always involved in everything--to pull in an expanding circle of people. Thus, for example, the Community Involvement Process seeks out respected people from all segments of the school community, including segments who are not usually active in school community affairs.

8. Successful efforts provide many different types of opportunities for involvement in the joint problem-solving process for people in different stages of development and with different degrees of confidence. They do not restrict involvement to a focus on participation in formal meetings.

Resources

Bloomenthal, H. Promoting your cause. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1974, $3.50.

How to use the news media, plan a campaign, conduct a meeting, make a speech, and create displays and exhibits.

Foundation Directory. New York: Foundation Center, 1976. Available at most public and university libraries.

This is the basic reference book on foundations throughout the United States--who they are, where they are, and what their primary funding interests are.

Grantsmanship Center News. Available from the Grantsmanship Center, 1015 West Olympic Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90015. Subscriptions are $15 per year, eight issues.

A magazine with informative articles on how to best raise money for your organization, how to find foundation and government funds, how to develop effective proposals, and how to interpret current legislation and government action related to funds and to non-profit organizations.

Huenefeld, J. The community activists' handbook. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970, $2.95.

Written for action around general community problems, this book contains specific suggestions for building an organization--membership, use of press, planning meetings.

Parenting in 1976: A listing from PMIC. Austin: Southwest Educational Development Corporation, 1976. Available from Parents Materials Information Center, Southwest Regional Development Center, 211 East Seventh Street, Austin, Texas 78701, (512) 476-6861, $5.00.

A book listing printed materials (books, magazines,

bibliographies) and their publishers. The book is arranged by topics such as discipline, parent/school/community involvement, and group relations. PMIC also has available detailed information sheets (15¢ / sheet) on some of the materials listed in Parenting in 1976.

Wilson, G.B. Teacher power: Strategies for parent, teacher and community groups to improve the schools. Atlanta: Humanics Press, 1975. Available from Humanics Press, 881 Peachtree Street, NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30308, (404) 874-3885, $7.00.

Although oriented toward teacher groups, the strategies and suggestions given here about organizing for educational change are applicable to all groups interested in schools. The book is essentially organized around the change steps: analysis, strategy, tactics, evaluation, and follow-up.

See also other Resources:

NCCE, Fund raising by parent/citizen groups, p. 83.

NCCE, Parents organizing to improve schools, p. 83.

Foster & Back, "A neighborhood school board," p. 105.

2. LOOKING AROUND/ASSESSING NEEDS

We've almost become a self-destruct mechanism. We meet and the director says, "What do you think about this cash-flow project?" and someone will say, "You're the director--you work that out." Then, a question might come up about program objectives for a new sex-education curriculum, and I can bet that instead of getting volunteers to work on a committee, I'll hear someone say, "Let the teachers do that." I'm talking about people who fought for the right to sit on this board. We started off with a lot more bang than whimper, but something happened.

--director of a New York City community group

When individuals and groups come together, as did those described in the first section, they are usually either attempting to deal with a very specific crisis situation or they have some broad idea about what they want to change. All too often, however, the initial burst of enthusiasm passes. Efforts that survive beyond the first steps usually take a next step of assessing overall school community needs to develop longer range ideas for action. The alternative to identifying needs and setting priorities is usually a splintering of the group in many directions or a lapse into inactivity.

There are many different ways that various groups have found to assess the needs of their school community, using all kinds of formal and informal methods.

Examples

Identifying the Major Needs of Teachers, Parents, and Administrators: Center for New Schools

> *The school and its staff alone cannot usually make lasting changes without the active involvement of parents, students, and other citizens. Likewise, parents and students can enforce some minimal standards for the school's operation, but cannot by themselves insure quality education....It is by tapping the total resources of the school community and by involving all parts of the school community in joint problem-solving that it is most likely that education will actually improve.*
> --*Center for New Schools* [11]

Center for New Schools (CNS) is working with several public schools in Chicago in an improvement effort that involves teachers, parents, and administrators. At the Cuffe School on Chicago's South Side, CNS advisors found an initial willingness of most people involved in the school community to work cooperatively for school improvement. The CNS advisory team includes a Parent Advisor, a Teacher Advisor, and an Administration Advisor; it is the responsibility of each one to help the group they work with deal with priority problems. At the same time, they help parents, students, and administrators find common grounds for increasing cooperation.

To assess the major needs of each group, the advisors conducted individual interviews with the entire teaching staff, the principal, and key parents who were active in the school in a variety of ways. One CNS advisor described the importance of these interviews:

"By meeting with people individually, we made sure their own concerns came through loudly and were not lost in a group discussion. We also found out a lot about them and the history of the school, before we were put on the spot and asked what we could do to help. As we talked with people, we tried to think, 'How do these people see their jobs and their problems? rather than putting them into our own pre-set categories.

"We then used the interviews with teachers to plan a needs assessment workshop. Basically, we asked them to work in small groups to list their priorities for improving the school, then work toward a consensus on what they most wanted to work on in the next year. We went through a similar workshop with parents."

CNS advisors found that at Cuffe School teachers want to improve faculty communication and cooperation, improve the physical facilities, and find new ways to deal with school discipline. The principal wants to focus on staff development opportunities for teachers and on increasing the quantity and quality of parent participation. Parents want to broaden participation in the PTA/Advisory Council, improve parent-teacher relations by helping teachers in the classroom, and improve the school's physical facilities.

> Now that all members of the school community have decided on their major priorities, we will spend the next year helping them take practical steps for dealing with them. We have developed a written agreement with each group, spelling out what is expected of us and of them.
>
> --Center for New Schools Parent Advisor

Learning a Variety of Skills for Looking at Schools: Citizens of the Eastside for Community Action

Citizens of the Eastside for Community Action (CECA) was established as a grass-roots improvement organization more than a decade ago in a town in central Illinois. The association came together by design. There was no special crisis except the general crisis of living and surviving, although there was concern about gangs in the neighborhood intimidating children. The core group of parents were also interested in becoming more active with the local Wilson Elementary School. Mary Rumbac is the founder and dynamic leader of the group. She started the group by having meetings in her home. After several years, membership included not only parents and community people, but teachers, principals, and even the superintendent.

Mrs. Rumbac had overseen the development of a long list of school needs. The group felt that the community needed an early childhood program so that children could be introduced to school at age three instead of five. They felt that the community had a right to quality administrators dedicated to improving the schools. They felt that in-coming teachers were entitled to better working conditions so that they might bring more confidence and assurance to their classrooms.

CECA experienced many successes with their efforts to address these needs on a single-issue basis. The school board did approve preschool and early childhood programs based on active parent

involvement. A principal who was seen as insensitive and unqualified was removed from his position. When CECA joined forces with the teachers' organization to improve working conditions for new teachers, their demands were met

Mrs. Rumbac felt they had become very good at responding to crises and dealing with specific issues, but she wanted the group to become more systematic in looking at the entire school program. She negotiated with the superintendent to allow parents to work with teachers and principals to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their local schools, and then to continue to work with the school staff to improve them. She contacted Mel Baker, who was skilled in research techniques for school evaluation. Mr. Baker and the leadership of CECA worked together intensively to design a series of 20 workshops that would first give people the skills to take a careful look at their schools, then involve them directly in the school assessment.

A core group of 25 parents, teachers, and administrators attended most of the sessions. Participants learned how to make checklists to document school physical conditions and supervision on the playgrounds. They put together questionnaires on which parents and teachers could rate the effectiveness of different parts of the school program. They role played interviews in which they tried to pin down an evasive school administrator. They learned how to prepare for an interview and assess the results afterwards. They learned to use videotape and still

photography to document the learning program in the classroom. They practiced observation techniques, struggling to record just what they saw as objectively as possible and to save their judgments for later. They learned to analyze school budgets and other school district documents.

All of these sessions involved active learning such as designing questionnaires and role playing interviews. During the week after many of the evening sessions, the participants had regular assignments in the schools, using their checklists in documenting school physical conditions, interviewing principals, and videotaping in classrooms. Mel Baker described the effects of the workshop:

"I guessed that people would be enthusiastic about interviews. During one of our get-acquainted sessions, one person said, 'I interview my friends all the time, whenever I talk with them. I'm always gathering information. I do more listening than talking, but I want to learn how to interview people who are strangers to me.'

"Observations in the schools were very important. Trainees needed to develop skills, however, in recognizing significant events or activities to record. People new to school evaluation tend to think that an observation is only significant if it involves drama--something out of the ordinary. During the workshops I wanted them to learn that some seemingly simple activities, such as 'students in the classroom are making

decorations for a bulletin board' should be noted down.

"The media approach to research is probably the newest technique we used. There is a lot of drama in having that magic eye recording the visual scene with nothing added or deleted. When the group witnessed an event and then had a visual and sound record of it, it provided a good base not only for evaluating the event but for evaluating yourself and how you see things. It shows how unreliable your perceptions are sometimes, how you don't always see what you thought."

The workshop series seemed to be a success. It gave people new skills that they could apply in many situations. It increased the teamwork and the confidence of the group. And it brought them directly into the schools to take a first-hand look at them through new eyes.

Developing a Clear Simple Way to Look at Your Schools: United Bronx Parents

> *A school which is frequently scrutinized by the public will become, at the very least, cleaner, better repaired, and less chaotic--provided the parents don't keep quiet about the conditions they find. If the staff knows that visitors are likely to drop in at any time, fewer children will be sent out into halls for punishment, and more teachers will learn to stop shouting--maybe. Although facts and figures are important, nothing will tell you as much about your child's school as a personal visit.*
>
> *--United Bronx Parents*[12]

United Bronx Parents began as a grass-roots, self-help organization of Puerto Rican parents located in the South Bronx, New York City. It was started in 1965 by Evelina Antonetty, the

the president of a local PTA. United Bronx Parents has gradually expanded its influence in the South Bronx through training and organizing other parents and parent groups. They are now active in about 80 schools.

United Bronx Parents has mastered one particularly critical skill--saying what they mean. They have excited professional educators as well as parents with their open, straightforward talk. Their guide, "How to Make a School Visit," was prepared for their Parent Leadership Training Program. The booklet is easy to read and specific. It is a "how-to-do-it" book of the first order. It literally takes the parent from the time visitation is planned, up the walk to the schoolhouse door, into the office, into the principal's office, through the corridors, and into the classroom. There are suggestions about important observations to be made at every station along the way. The parent who knows little about visiting a school is made ready for almost anything that happens and can go in as an alert, well-briefed, knowledgeable visitor. Consider, for instance, the exactness of these items selected at random from the school visit guide, keeping in mind their usefulness to parents:

> Whether or not you have heard anything, once you plan to visit a school, gather additional background material. Stand outside the school before dismissal time and talk to some parents waiting for their younger children.
>
> Is there a well-placed sign with posters announcing various school and parent activities? Is it up-to-date?
>
> What happens when you go into the principal's office? Does he call in several assistants? Some principals

instantly summon their subordinates (almost as if to protect themselves).

In the classroom, are the children busy working? Are there enough books, supplies and learning materials? Is there an empty fish tank and a dying plant in the Science corner? [13]

Aside from this very excellent tool for school evaluation, United Bronx has produced a series of notebooks entitled A School Evaluation Manual by Parents and Students which presents a more detailed, structured approach to looking at a school and then choosing a course of action. The manual was prepared under a grant from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Again, the material is valuable because it is explicit, interesting, and practical.

For example, the sections of the manual are bound separately for easy use. They are each printed on a different color of paper, with liberal use of thought-provoking photos. Each section addresses a different step in school evaluation: "How Good is Your Child's School?" "What Kind of School Do You Want?" "Principal," and "Action." Each section is organized to include questions parents need to ask their schools, information they need to know, and action steps they need to take. United Bronx stresses, however, that their material is by parents and students for parents and students; it is intended to be added to and changed by those who use it:

> It is our intent to include every possible point of view and present an extremely flexible manual. All the information included is not relevant to every student, parent, community or school. Choose those topics that meet your needs. Remember, YOU are the expert, what kind of school do you want? [14]

The Neighborhood School Board and Teacher Evaluation

When our Neighborhood School Board first got started, we went into the school and evaluated our teachers with the backing of the Louisville School Board. When the county took over, they wanted the principal to do that by himself. That man is so interested in keeping us involved, that even though it is supposed to be only his responsibility, he still has us doing it. The thing I like about it is that the teachers welcome parent evaluations. They even request it. They want us in those rooms. I think that says a lot about the climate here at Roosevelt.

--Roosevelt School parent

Car Foster, Roosevelt's principal, says they started to construct their evaluation process in June 1973:

"It wasn't easy. After looking through piles of check lists, rating forms, and accounts of methods used elsewhere, some board members were not only tired but frustrated. We finally came up with an outline which incorporated philosophy, criteria, and procedural steps. The essential ingredients were: (1) evaluation should be growth producing, (2) evaluation should be continuous, (3) evaluation is communication of honest and subjective feedback, and (4) the process is flexible.

"The Roosevelt Neighborhood School Board was committed. In addition to hours of scheduling and observation, over 50 hours of feedback sessions were taped. Board members observed classroom instruction, looking for data in three categories: (1) things I liked, (2) things I didn't like, and (3) things I didn't

understand. Each staff person was asked to submit to the board goals and objectives for children, parents, staff, and self in three areas: (1) academic growth, (2) social growth, and (3) personal growth. We attempted subjectively to evaluate the staff person as a facilitator of learning in all situations at school, in and out of the classroom, with all people. I can testify that when one is evaluated by this process, one feels its power."[15]

Patterns and Issues in Looking Around/Assessing Needs

1. As mentioned earlier, groups that form in a specific crisis often dissolve after the crisis is resolved. Groups that form with a general dissatisfaction or a desire to improve the schools often go off in all directions. For either type of group, the process of documenting priority needs and focusing on a plan of action is a key ingredient for sustaining a group's efforts.

2. There are many different ways to document needs, some of which have been illustrated by the needs assessment activities just described. They include attitude questionnaires, checklists, interviews, videotape, photography, and structured group activities. Some are suitable for school visits, others for door-to-door interviews with parents, still others for group meetings of parents or teachers. We provide some resources at the end of this chapter.

3. A key aspect of conducting a needs assessment is the active involvement of parents, students, teachers, and administrators in designing the approach, collecting the information, analyzing the information, and presenting the results. These processes can serve as a basis for increasing group skills, building cooperation, and building commitment to follow through on the results. One caution: involving people in tedious tabulations of results has sometimes drained too much energy or taken so long that enthusiasm was lost. In choosing a method for assessing needs, consider ways

that results can be quickly analyzed to keep enthusiasm going.

4. Another key benefit of needs assessment is to build unity and legitimacy around the action steps that follow. People who have a say in determining needs are more likely to participate in addressing those needs that turn out to be high priorities. Everyone who isn't consulted is a potential opponent of the suggested changes. Also, systematic assessment of needs makes the efforts that follow more legitimate--it undercuts the argument that the problems identified don't really reflect the concerns of a significant number of people.

5. Needs assessment is a way to bring in people who were formerly uninvolved, especially parents. Door-to-door needs assessment interviews provide an opportunity to make contact with those who might currently feel they are isolated from the school. One extremely effective effort to mobilize parents in a school noted for parent apathy was based, first, on door-to-door interviews to determine parents' greatest immediate concern (it turned out to be fighting on the playground); second, on observation of the playground for several days to document how fights started, what supervisors did, etc.; and third, on a parent meeting to begin to deal with the problem. Seventy parents turned out for a PTA meeting that usually had a turnout of about 10 people, and they formed the nucleus of a group that has become active in the school on a variety of issues.

6. In assessing the needs of the school, it is critical

that those involved see things first-hand and use a variety of assessment techniques not just rely on the judgment of one or two individuals who appear knowledgeable.

7. One of the major priorities for a needs assessment should be to give people confidence in their own judgment, even if they have not been trained in evaluation or research. The questionnaires, checklists, interviews, and group meetings for needs assessment should be carried out in clear, simple, direct language. People should ask that concepts they don't understand be explained in ordinary language. Professional educators should strive to communicate this way customarily, without having to be challenged about it.

8. Needs assessment and evaluation activities should be seen as just one step in the joint problem-solving process, not as an end in themselves. As mentioned before, these activities serve to focus a group's efforts; and build the unity, legitimacy, and confidence of those involved. Once needs and priorities have been identified, it takes the energies and the involvement of all facets of the school community to begin to make things happen.

Chicago Public Schools
Board of Education
Department of Administrative Research
228 North LaSalle Street
Chicago, Illinois 60601

The following documents are published by the Board of Education of the City of Chicago and are available from the Department of Administrative Research. Free. These are basic reference books for information on Chicago's schools:

Organization structure of the Chicago public schools. September 1975.
Directory of the Chicago public schools. Up-dated annually.
Fact and figures. Up-dated annually. Contains information on the organization of the school system, membership, personnel, finances, and physical plants.
Selected school characteristics: 1973-74.
Report on 1973-74 city-wide testing program.
Report on 1973-74 per pupil staffing costs: Elementary schools.

Catalog of curriculum publications. Available from the Board of Education, Department of Curriculum, free.

Lists all the Board of Education curriculum publications by subject area and grade level. Includes all the curriculum guides used by teachers as well as listings of leaflets available at no charge. The materials are available in limited quantities to organizations and individuals for the cost of printing, handling, and mailing.

Chicago's Spanish-speaking population: Selected statistics. Chicago: City of Chicago, Department of Development and Planning, 1973. Available from City of Chicago, Department of Development and Planning, Room 1000, City Hall, Chicago, Illinois 60602. Report available in both Spanish and English, free.

A paper-bound report based on selected data from the 1970 census. It describes general population

characteristics, citizenship, mobility, transportation to work, housing, education and school enrollment, employment status, occupation and industry of the employed, and income and poverty status.

Directory of Illinois Schools. Springfield: Illinois Office of Education. The directory is up-dated annually. Available from the Illinois Office of Education, Information and Publication Section, 100 North First Street, Springfield, Illinois 62777, (217) 782-1829. Free, limit one copy per individual or organization.

A comprehensive listing of the basic facts and figures concerning Illinois Board of Education; Office of Education; the various Illinois boards concerned with education; key educational organizations; colleges and universities; teachers; school districts; and elementary and high schools. Lists of other publications available through the Illinois Office of Education can be found at most public libraries.

ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center)

A national information system operated by the National Institute of Education to provide ready access to descriptions of exemplary programs, research and development efforts, and related information that can be used in developing more effective educational programs. Your public library should either have a copy or be able to direct you to a copy of Research in Education, the monthly index of ERIC documents. Ask a librarian or other familiar user how to use ERIC for your first time. It's somewhat overwhelming at first, but has a wealth of data if used correctly.

Marian, B., Rosen, D., & Osborne, D. How to research the power structure of your secondary school system. Lincoln, Nebraska: Study Commission on Undergraduate Education and the Education of Teachers, 1973. Available from the Nebraska Curriculum Development Center, University of Nebraska, Andrews Hall, Room 338, Lincoln, Nebraska 68588, $2.00.

A manual intended to assist individuals and groups, particularly students working in their local community. Includes a tremendous amount of information on the agencies, organizations, and individuals who affect

education and the schools on the federal, state, and local levels. Also included are a case study, guidelines for questions to ask to gain more information, and where to go to ask those questions.

United Bronx Parents. How to make a school visit. New York: Author, 1967. Available from United Bronx Parents. 810 East 152nd Street, Bronx, New York 10455, (312) 993-5300. $1.00.

A step-by-step guide to assist parents interested in evaluating their children's school. Includes specific advice to parents, information, and suggested questions for them to ask. Some examples of section titles are: Advance Preparation, Philosophy--Trust Your Judgment, In the Principal's Office, and In the Hallways.

See also other Resources:

Lurie, How to change the schools, p. 82.

Committee for Citizen Involvement, Toward greater citizen participation, p. 86.

Factual politics series, p. 87.

3. MAKING THINGS HAPPEN

There are many ways that parents and school staff become involved in strengthening their local schools. Depending on where they see the major needs of their schools, people involved in joint problem solving have taken three main directions in making things happen:

1. Joint involvement in decision making and problem solving.
2. Joint involvement in the learning program.
3. Joint involvement in insuring just and humane treatment for students.

Of course, any school with an active effort in joint problem solving may have activities in all these areas going on at the same time. These three categories are merely useful ways to present some of the activities that are possible when parents and school staff work as partners in the learning process.

Examples of Joint Involvement in Decision Making and Problem Solving

Most schools have some existing mechanisms for involving parents with teachers and administrators, although they may be superficial or under control of an "in-group" that is reluctant to share their power and influence. Some schools have PTA's or parent councils, others have special advisory boards for federal Title I or bilingual programs. A first step toward significant joint involvement in the school is to assess those groups that exist. It is often better to attempt to strengthen them than to start separate organizations, since groups already in existence may have legitimacy and/or legal power in school decision making. A first step is to find out what regulations govern the functioning of such groups. They seldom have been officially granted clear decision-making power, but regulations often require consultation or approval at key times (such as the time when a new funding proposal is submitted).

Groups who are effective in increasing the parent role in decision making usually become thoroughly familiar with these regulations or guidelines and the way they are carried out in practice. One parent council, for example, was regularly asked by the principal to "sign off" on federal proposals just before they were to be sent to Washington, with the principal arguing that failure to act immediately would mean loss of a great deal of money for the school. After this had had happened several

times, parent leaders researched the funding timetable and their rights to participate in proposal development for their bilingual program. They then asked the principal several months before the deadline to be included in the proposal writing process from the beginning. Following that, the parents played a significant role in shaping the proposal to include more parent participation, new educational approaches, and more specialized staff training. They later followed up and saw that these provisions were carried out after refunding.

Joint involvement in decision making and problem solving runs the gamut from the shared power arrangements of the Roosevelt School in Louisville to the efforts of United Bronx Parents to get a "toehold" in some schools in the South Bronx.

Accomplishment and Confidence Go Hand-in-Hand: Roosevelt Elementary School

> *The Roosevelt Neighborhood School Board has eighteen members: twelve parents, six professionals, and one student when school is in session. Members serve for a two-year term. In the last election, we had twenty-seven people running for eight slots. We've come a long way since I went to that first meeting and talked to those four lonely frustrated people.*
>
> *--Car Foster, principal*

The Roosevelt Board members are enthusiastic about describing their accomplishments. It is easy to see that they have given attention to a wide range of concerns. For instance, they have successfully increased the employment of male teachers so that they now represent 50 percent of the staff. They have become so proficient in writing proposals for federal funding that last

year they received $292,000 from the government to supplement their regular school budget. Foster and Back paint a vivid picture of the dynamics involved when parents begin to make things happen:

"The parents wrote a letter requesting that a seventh grade be established at Roosevelt. The letter was hand-carried to the central board of education, which later gave an affirmative answer. On the surface, this appears to be a rather simple, logical action occurring through normal operational channels, but it was more. Its importance was expressed by the quivering throat and sweaty palm of one of the scared parents who for the first time in her life had confronted power and won. Its importance was also expressed by the fact that this was the first time any of these parents had dared to go into the building that housed the Louisville Board of Education."

One Louisville parent we interviewed for this handbook was an articulate respondent who described the Roosevelt situation and her part in it with an easy candor. She is presently an aide in the school as a result of federal funding for one of the Neighborhood School Board's grant proposals. The principal says about her: "For the first six months, I thought she was mute. She was so shy that she did not talk on the telephone. She had others make her calls for her. Now, she is director of a $50,000 community development project and runs it by herself. She got an airplane and flew to Washington and talked to them up there too." [16]

Taking Action and Getting Results: United Bronx Parents

> *After you have looked through your school and seen its good points and its bad points, you may want to take some steps to see to it that the situation is improved. You may want to highlight and reinforce good points and you will want to see to it that bad situations are bettered.*
>
> *--United Bronx Parents* [17]

In the fifth notebook ("Action") used by United Bronx Parents in their program to train parents to participate in the joint problem-solving process, they give examples of what they call "action steps." These are steps usually taken by parent groups in making changes in their schools. The first suggestion is that after a school evaluation, the group members meet, discuss findings, and select a priority issue. After that has been done, a select committee of the most versatile, articulate, and vocal members should be formed. These are the persons who are going to have to take part in any meetings with the school board or other persons of authority. These are also the persons who are going to have to get the support of other agencies or institutions in the community. According to United Bronx, they should feel comfortable if interviewed by media persons and, if called upon, should be willing to demonstrate or boycott.

If a decision is made to visit a staff person in a school district's central office, the group needs to decide who is the appropriate one to visit. If the problem revolves around supplies, for instance, there is little need to deal with someone who has no power over budget matters or who is involved with textbook

selection only. When visiting staff people, it is important to insist on meeting with the person who made the appointment originally. A copy of all demands should be presented, and only written commitments should be accepted in return.

After any committee meetings, it is important to hold a follow-up session immediately. Everyone in the group must be kept informed about the action process. A letter should be sent to the person with whom the committee met, confirming what was discussed. This is one way of restating for emphasis your understanding of exactly what was said by whom at the meeting. This lets those on the staff in positions of power know that your group is alert. "Action" advises parents:

"If you get a reply that is satisfactory, it is necessary to write another letter thanking the person responsible for clearing up the problem. Publicize the results in the community so that credit is given to the proper persons. You may need to return to the person with another problem, so keep relations as friendly as possible--if you can. If the reply is unsatisfactory, it is time to meet with the full group again. Tell as many people as possible that you were not satisfied. Send out fliers, or try to get interviewed by media people so that a lot of publicity is given to your feelings. After that it is time to decide on some stronger action to elicit the response you desire." [18]

According to "Action" it is basic that everyone understands and agrees upon objectives and goals, individual roles, and steps

to be taken; since the planning and what is learned from the action is as important as the action itself.

Examples of Joint Involvement in the Learning Program

One of the most exciting developments in the last 10 years has been the increasing involvement of parents with teachers in the learning programs of their children's schools. This joint involvement has taken many forms. Parents have been hired as teacher aides in classrooms and as school-community representatives to link parents with school staff. Parents have worked as classroom volunteers to assist teachers. Parents have been called on for their special skills for various class projects; they have become cooperating teachers by providing learning experiences for students outside school walls. Parents have carried out all sorts of supportive tasks for teachers, from building educational equipment to collecting materials for class projects. Parents have most recently been enlisted to offer supplementary learning experiences for their children at home that tie in with what is being done in the classroom. Examples of these various successful programs speak for themselves in suggesting the range of possibilities that are open.

Anyone Can Be a Teacher: Saint Paul Open School

The Saint Paul Open School is an experimental public school founded in 1971 that serves 500 students from the ages of five to eighteen. It was started as the result of a coalition effort by parents and public school educators, and the deep involvement of

the community in the school has continued at all levels over the past five years. It is called an open school because:

> Space is open. Once housed in a 50-year-old factory building whose four floors were arranged in large open space resource areas, the school moved in the fall of 1976 into a large inner city high school building. Emptied to comply with state desegregation directives, this 1890's building is being modified to create a combination of open space resource centers and clusters of classrooms. The students are free to move from space to space at any time. Those who participate in the community-based learning programs work anywhere in the Twin Cities area.
>
> Enrollment is open. Students of all ages from all over the city are selected by lottery from those who volunteer.
>
> Decision-making is open. The governing body of the school is an advisory council composed of parents, students, citizens, and school staff.
>
> Learning is open. Mini-classes are offered each month in subjects such as ecology, creative dramatics, print-making, and yoga.
>
> Teaching is open. Anyone can be a teacher. Older students teach younger students how to read; senior citizens teach knitting, tin can sculpture, and checkers to students; parents act as resource people in leather work, music, and home economics; lawyers, veterinarians, insurance brokers, and other professionals teach students about their jobs. [19]

The school's teaching staff is augmented by hundreds of volunteers who teach students inside and outside the school--many of them are parents. The school has a well-developed system for locating volunteers, motivating them to participate, assessing their skills and strengths, and assigning them in such a way that the school program will be enriched. Recruitment procedures involve letters, meetings, announcements, and speaking engagements. Later, there are follow-up orientation group meetings, telephone

calls, and letters. Assignments are made so that the volunteers feel comfortable and not alien in their new role, and are fulfilled in such a way that participation may be continuous.

There are about 250 volunteers who come to work in the school each year. The Board of Education employs some parents in the school. One of these parents, Augusta Strowder, acts as a full-time coordinator directing the volunteer program. There is both method and order in her work. Her many activities include sending out the initial parent information form. This is a short, easy-to-answer questionnaire that does not require a hard commitment, but gives the coordinator a working list of those who are interested enough to respond. The coordinator also distributes the volunteer application. This is more detailed than the initial form, asking for information about educational or experiential background, specific skills, and areas of interest. This form infers that a commitment is anticipated -- blank spaces are provided for a listing of group size preferred, time of day preferred, and days of the week preferred.

Another volunteer questionnaire that is used is even more probing: "Have you a hobby or talent to share? Have you a collection you could share? Can you help enrich children's backgrounds in the study of other countries? Have you something to contribute that will help children appreciate the life of the past, contributions of pioneers, ethnic groups, etc. that have made an impact on

our present culture?" [20]

Cover letters go out with each questionnaire. They are warm and encouraging. Parents are made to feel that the school needs a wide variety of volunteers, not just an elite group of degree holders. One letter from Strowder suggests some specific contributions needed:

1. A parent may plan, prepare, and teach a given subject in a chosen area of the school.

2. Parents can volunteer to help with general maintenance of resource areas. This could include repair and construction, decorating areas, cleaning and straightening of areas on weekends, and keeping an area bulletin board.

3. Parents can assist with typing and school mailings.

4. Parents can welcome and explain the school to visitors.[21]

As questionnaires are returned, responses are checked and put in categories. The coordinator has prepared a small manual called "A Gold Mine of Parent Resources." Various interest areas such as drama, arts and crafts, cooking, and medicine are listed in this directory. When any member of the school community--students, teachers, or other parents--has a need for a special skill or service, they refer to the compact manual showing names, addresses, telephone numbers, and contact hours for parent volunteers.

A Spiral of Parent Involvement: The Open Corridor Program

> *What becomes clear is that even to raise the question about including parents is to mistake the issue, because the informal educative process is one that is inherent in the parent-child family-child relationship, in the informal association of the ordinary life that exists outside the school. The anomaly lay in the fact that parents had been excluded from the educative process, not that parents should be included in this process.*
> *--Lillian Weber* [22]

Lillian Weber has developed an approach to the education of children that has taken firm hold in many New York City public schools, most of which struggle with problems of large size and the isolation and depersonalization of teachers and students.

The Open Corridor approach involves the bringing together, on a common corridor, of four to six teachers of differing grade levels, who are all working toward organizing the environment and relationships of their classrooms to be more responsive to different children's active ways of learning. These clusters in a section of a large school become the nucleus of more interrelated mini-communities within a school. They use not only their own classroom space for learning, but may expand to the corridor, basement, and school yard. Teachers on the Corridor develop, in different ways, carefully planned environments for children that make the fullest use of concrete materials to stimulate children's learning. The Open Corridor program, with support from the advisors who work with Lillian Weber, is currently in operation in nine schools in District #3 on the Upper West Side of Manhattan and in schools in Districts #2 and #4.

Many other schools, even without advisory support, developed clusters that call themselves Open Corridors. All Open Corridor programs were set up with the voluntary participation of teachers and parents and the consent of the principal. As the program has developed, principal consent has become a more active kind of support -- indeed, in some instances, leadership. In many instances parents were more than volunteers; they were instrumental in pressing for the Open Corridor program in their schools. As one parent describes the history:

"Attempts at informal education and the notion of community schools for our neighborhood probably began during the teacher strikes of 1967 and 1968 when parents and teachers in many parts of the city kept schools open for children. The significance of our involvement during that period was immeasurable. We learned that we could work harmoniously in an atmosphere of mutual respect and that this atmosphere was not only nurturing, but perhaps basic to a better education for the children."[23]

When they heard of the Open Corridor approach, many of these same parents pressed for the adoption of the program in their schools and became heavily involved after it started. Parents associated with the Open Corridor tend to feel a great deal of satisfaction because their involvement is so maximal. Many remember when they could only get into a school on demand. That is, until they fought for change, parents entered schools only when they were summoned by the principa', usually to discuss some problem with their child. Because of this

closed door policy, they were unable to observe many disparities. For example, one such disparity was that although many schools were integrated, classrooms within those schools frequently were not. One first grade classroom might have been all white, and the one across the hall might have been brown, black, and yellow. This situation began to change when the New York City schools began to decentralize their administrative structure, giving community people more access to the schools. In addition, in District #3 "balanced classrooms" were required -- schools had to desegregate on the classroom level as well as on the building level. In the midst of these events, the Open Corridor offered a sound educational method to implement these new structures. Open Corridor communities try to have balanced classes, reflecting their philosophical belief that the best environment is one that groups children heterogeneously with respect to race, ethnicity, and ability.

It is important to note that Open Corridor education is an option or alternative for students, parents, and teachers. It functions side-by-side with more traditional classroom methods. The teachers and the parents of each student in the schools involved make the decision about joining or not joining a corridor community. This is vital, because the Open Corridor cannot function without parent and teacher confidence and participation. For those who are not sure or who are more comfortable with the traditional situation, the open function of the corridor classes and the open meetings of the teachers in the community allow observation -- even trial -- of the

new structures or of elements of what has been observed before commitment.

In many, many schools throughout the nation, parents go along with students when the e is a field trip to help the teacher with supervision. They do that in the Open Corridors, too. The volunteer parent participation at schools like P.S. 75 and P.S. 84 is so comprehensive, however, and goes so far beyond "going along to the zoo," that it seems more appropriate to think of parents as being as much a part of the class as are the student and teacher. In addition, each class at P.S. 75 and P.S. 84 has a class parent --a person who is not only there with the students and the teacher but who is the link between that class and the parent association.

The Open Corridor uses many concrete materials in its program, so parents are alert to the needs of corridors. They do a lot of scrounging. One parent, out for a walk, noticed a discarded sofa. She called the school, left a message about the find, and arrangements were made to pick it up, since one classroom on the corridor had been searching for a sofa. There are boxes in schools that are used as depositories for materials that have either been requested or might be used well by some group.

One observer of the Open Corridors noted what she called the spiral of involvement: "Typically a parent comes to the class to take a look and to see how his or her child is doing. The parent is engaged by the teacher and introduced to the Open Corridor approach.

The parent may then return and continue to participate in the Corridor, becoming more involved over time. One important tenet of the Open Corridor approach is that all varieties of parent participation are valued equally. Some parents may choose to work primarily in the classroom, another in corridor activities, others may choose to become involved in meetings, participating in decision making or curriculum development, homework, the reporting process, or use of the halls, the lunchrooms, etc.

"It is important to understand that parents on the Open Corridor are not seen, nor do they see themselves, as watchdogs. They work with the teacher, and as such function in a positive, supportive role. Parents supporting the Open Corridor have been particularly active in attempting to protect their program in the New York City fiscal crisis, pressing the demand for maintenance of programs, pressing the school system to retain experienced Open Corridor teachers in their schools, volunteering time so that the changes they helped bring about can be sustained, even in the midst of the budget crisis."

A spiral of growth in understanding also describes how teachers have related to the parent role in the Open Corridor programs. They started out by drawing their reorganizations from the informal context they saw as typical of parent-child relationships -- the acceptance of the child as having a place by right, the acceptance of the child as is, the awareness of differences in interest and in style. But as teachers became busy with the development of their open classrooms,

they drew parents into helping them on school terms. Now again some teachers and parents <u>together</u> join in examining the implications for the school scene of the informal context of supports for language development and for all development. Parents are seen not only as helping the classroom but as a bridge for the classroom to enter into understanding the wider work world and the community.

Parent-Teacher Partnership to Improve Skills: Grant Elementary School

> *When schools began keeping their doors locked so that you had to bang on them to get in, it just added to the school's isolation from the community. It's that much harder for parents to come into the school and to feel that they have a vital role to play.*

Operation Higher Achievement set out to challenge that sense of isolation and involve parents in Chicago's Grant Elementary School in a qualitative way, working more closely with the teachers and principal to improve their children's school and learning experiences. The initial measurable effect of the program is marked reading score gains for those children whose parents and teachers were most closely involved in the program. The positive effect of the program on the attitudes and relationships of those children, parents, and teachers can never be fully measured.

Operation Higher Achievement was conceived by District #9 Superintendent Albert Briggs. Briggs contacted the National College of Education (NCE) to request assistance in putting the program into action in Grant Elementary School on Chicago's West Side. A team of experienced educators and community people was

formed by NCE to work in the Grant school community. Their first step was to find out what was in the minds of parents, teachers, and administrators: what did they think it would take to make Operation Higher Achievement a success? The NCE team spent a great deal of time talking and meeting with people in the school community. A planning group was then formed of representative parents and teachers. Based on the information that had been gathered in the school community, the planning group developed ideas for a three-day workshop that would bring together parents, teachers, students, and administrators in a new setting.

This workshop was held in the spring of 1975 in a hotel in suburban Chicago. Participants engaged in experiences and activities which helped them set goals for the Grant school community and develop action plans to reach those goals. For instance, participants developed lists of the strengths and resources of each role group in the school community. Out of the workshop came six goals for Grant, including increased parental desire to help their children learn more in school, closer school-parent cooperation, stricter school discipline, and more community educational activities. Specific action plans were developed for each of the six goals.

Operation Higher Achievement has moved a long way toward meeting these goals. Several factors seem key in this success. The administrators involved in the project began with a deep commitment to involving parents in the school. Teachers were

given the option to participate intensely in the program or not: about one-third of Grant's teachers chose to participate.

Parents were involved in the program from the very beginning, and have been the moving force behind many of the activities in Operation Higher Achievement. For instance, parents worked with teachers to develop a parents' school handbook for the open house at the beginning of the school year. Parents worked with students and teachers in setting up a reading festival. Exhibits were designed which explained the Grant reading program. Later in the year, a school talent and fashion show was planned and run by parents. Ultimately, a core of about 150 parents was intensely involved in Grant Elementary School, with many more parents attending special events and getting involved in specific activities.

Another key factor in Operation Higher Achievement's success was that early in the program all members of the school community were given the opportunity to come together, share ideas, set goals, and plan action steps. Essential to this experience was the team of individuals who acted as facilitators, encouraging a process that brought out the strengths and resources of the school community. Operation Higher Achievement has been built on these strengths and resources.

Parents and teachers involved collaboratively are at the heart of Operation Higher Achievement. The effects of this involvement appear to be far-reaching. Clearly, parents are a rich source of skills, energy, knowledge, and enthusiasm in the school environ-

ment. In addition, the interest, assistance, and presence of parents in the school serve to motivate and encourage classroom teachers and other school staff to do their best in sensitively servicing the needs of each child. Children are encouraged to see the school and staff as sources of learning experiences rather than as adversaries or as parts of an institution removed from the realities of their world.

Examples of Insuring Just and Humane Treatment for Students

Several years ago, a mother found this unsigned and undated note from one year's teacher to the next in her child's cumulative record folder at her local school:

> A real sickie--abs., truant, stubborn and very dull. Is verbal only about outside and irrelevant facts. Can barely read (which was a huge accomplishment to get this far). Have fun.

Until the Congress passed the Buckley Amendment in 1974, giving parents the right to look at their children's school records, these types of abusive notes could quietly follow a child through 12 years of school. The Buckley Amendment has opened up school records, giving parents the right to challenge their accuracy. This amendment was a victory for one particular approach to joint problem solving called advocacy.

In a country that prides itself on due process of law, people involved in trying to improve the public schools have found that parents and students had few established rights. This imbalance often leads to the arbitrary exercise of power by school authorities. Many parents and educators believe there should be a more equal balancing of rights.

The role of the advocate is, like a lawyer, to insure that students are treated justly and humanely when they are suspended, for example. Advocates seek decisions based on providing the best possible education for a student -- not the administrative

convenience of the school.

An advocate may be a parent, a student, a psychologist, a social worker, a member of a community organization, or a person employed by the school system to protect student and parent rights. The advocate, familiar with the proper procedures of the school system and various laws and regulations, intervenes with school authorities either on behalf of specific students or to change a policy or procedure of the school system. Extensive advocacy work has been done on such issues as suspension from school, improper assignment of students to classes for slow learners, racial discrimination, sex discrimination, improper operation of bilingual programs, regulations or restrictions on individual rights of free expression and dress, discipline procedures, and access to school records.

Defending Student Rights: Advocates for Children of New York

> *It was February of 1970. We were sitting in Miriam Thompson's kitchen when the phone rang. On the other end of the line was a woman whose son had been suspended from school. She was particularly concerned because she felt that this time her son would drop out. The woman had heard that Miriam Thompson might be able to help. Thompson talked to the woman to find out all the facts of the situation, and to determine what steps might be taken to insure both that the rights of the student and his parents are respected and that some measure be taken to prevent this situation from recurring.*

This event is typical of the early work of Advocates for Children of New York. The organization was an outgrowth of a

number of events. In the late sixties, widely publicized turbulence at a school on the border of Queens and Brooklyn had resulted in massive student suspensions. Responding in large part to this event and to recent court decisions, a coalition of civil liberties groups, community organizations, service groups, and others began to pressure for "due process" protection for students in the suspension procedure. In early 1969, New York State passed a statute which did just that. By placing enormous pressure on the New York City Board of Education, this same coalition forced adoption of model by-laws for implementing the due process statute. In the fall of that year parents, community activists, and other interested parties convened to talk about how they might respond to these new laws. The groups assembled expressed a concern about implementation of the new statutes, including a shared need for lay advocates to insure implementation on the local level. Thus the idea for the advocacy service was created, and Thompson and her volunteers went to work.

The sustaining philosophy of the organization has been that parents and students need help in coping with schools. In recent years, many parents have begun to see themselves as consumers of education who suffer the abuse of large bureaucracies: not having access to information and not having input into the decisions which greatly affect them. The seriousness of the problem is supported by evidence of school systems' failure to deal effectively with

the large number of student suspensions and dropouts. Advocates for Children of New York statistics show that 50% of the students who enter high school in New York City do not graduate.

The Advocates for Children of New York try to insure that not only procedural rights (in suspensions, special education, etc.) are granted, but also that the real causes of the problems are worked out. For example, take the case of John. He had been repeatedly suspended before a lay advocate came in contact with him. It was clear from the start that to insure that John received all the rights of the suspension procedure would probably have little effect on whether he continued in the pattern of continued suspensions and eventually dropping out. John was a boy who needed a different kind of learning atmosphere than he was being offered in school. The advocate worked with John and people in a local service organization. They found him a half-time job and a program which allowed him to go to school for a shortened day. This schedule was much more suited to his goals and needs.

Today the Advocates for Children of New York is no longer a volunteer organization focusing on just one community. They have become a city-wide group with salaried staff. They continue to provide the advocacy service. In addition, they have a five-year-old alternative education program for students whom they are unable to involve productively in the public schools. This program has a staff member designated as ombudsman. One of his main goals is to

integrate youngsters back into the community at large. Two years ago, a group home was started to provide further support for some of the youngsters at the school.

Advocates for Children of New York is beginning to concentrate now on outreach. They examine and disseminate information about the reasons for dropouts and methods for avoiding this. They are involved in training community school boards and school faculties to be sensitive to the rights of students and to some of the reasons for the problems in schools. They work with parents and students to help them to be better informed. Acting on the assumption that many of the roots of the problems are systemic, Advocates staff members have served on a number of task forces and in an advisory capacity to the Chancellor of the New York City public schools, particularly in the area of special education.

Quite a long way from Mirium Thompson's kitchen.

After Access, What?: South Carolina Relations Program

> *Parents are told they can cooperate with school authorities, and some officials even encourage a limited involvement: "We want you involved in our school; we need your cooperation and your support." Then there comes the caveat: "But do not meddle." The meddling means crossing that line and getting into school business, whether that involves the administration of the school or what goes on in the classroom in terms of the instructional process.* [24]

The South Carolina Human Relations Program (sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee) was a major force for integration in South Carolina. They sued school systems to see that the

Supreme Court ruling on school integration was enforced, and they monitored the progress and the problems of school integration. Over a twelve-year period, they contested a wide variety of school system practices, such as the dismissal of Black teachers in the integration process, lack of leadership from principals of newly integrated schools, and tracking procedures that separated white from Black students inside an "integrated" school. Through a persistent long-term involvement in this process, they gained what they call "access" to the schools:

> There are several ways of getting access...There is access which is obtained through some process of constant pushing and community struggle, persistency, hanging in there. That's an informal process which stems from an individual concern or group concern. Then, there is access that one comes to by virtue of position. If you are on a school board you have a certain degree of access. If you're on a Title I parent advisory council, and it works the way we would like it to, you have a certain degree of access. If you're on the ESAA advisory committee, or the court-ordered parent monitoring body or citizen advisory committee set up by the school district, you have some degree of access. [25]

One particular area of the group's concern around which they achieved access to the schools was school suspension. They documented the ways in which suspensions were used as a tool to exclude Black students, and they fought for procedures to stop this practice. But they often found that a short-term victory that kept a student in school did nothing to solve the underlying school problems that had caused students be suspended in the first place. So, they have recently begun to add another dimension to their advocacy activities: the development of alternatives for the schools to

pursue. For example, they feel that in addition to insuring that suspended students receive due process, they must highlight and advocate alternative practices for schools that either eliminate the root causes of suspension or provide another way to deal with students who would normally be suspended. These could include student, parent, and school staff participation in writing a code of student rights and responsibilities. Or an "unwinding room" where students who get in trouble in class can be sent to cool off and have someone to talk with, often a fellow student. Thus, the group is combining a very sophisticated effort to monitor and to act as advocates for individuals with the attempt to change some of the basic underlying dynamics of the schools.

Some of the activities involved in the advocate role are described in advocate training materials developed by the Center for New Schools:

An effective advocate should:

1. Be sure you have done your research well about the facts of the situation.
2. Know the applicable rules of the school, laws, statutes, and administrative guidelines.
3. Get the backing of the parent advisory council or other parent group.
4. Work with a community organization, social agency, or other community group.
5. Have a good working knowledge of the structure and decision-making mechanisms of the Board of Education.

6. Develop a good working relationship with as many school system personnel as possible. Focus pressure on those who stand in the way of your objectives, not everyone who works for the school system.

7. Offer ALTERNATIVES to the present way of handling the situation.

8. Be willing to compromise when it seems reasonable or change your position if new facts come to light.

9. Stand firm on points you feel absolutely shouldn't be compromised.

10. Make sure students and/or their parents understand your approach and agree with it.

11. Get a release form from the parents or student to act in their behalf. [26]

Patterns and Issues in Making Things Happen

There are many ways that parents can become involved with school staff in a joint effort to improve their schools, including the following:

1. Making decisions or giving advice on neighborhood school boards, school councils, Title 1 councils, bilingual councils, etc.

2. Raising problems either with the staff of their local school or with central office staff, and following through until the problem is solved.

3. Monitoring the compliance of the school with existing laws and regulations.

4. Acting as advocates to represent the interests of individual students when the school makes a decision about a student.

5. Working as paid aides or school-community representatives to form a link between school and community.

6. Working as volunteers inside the school in the classroom and in other aspects of school operation.

7. Acting as resources for student learning experiences outside the school.

8. Offering learning experiences at home that coordinate with the learning program of the school.

9. Supporting the local school staff in obtaining adequate resources for the school and in obtaining approval for new programs.

10. Choosing from a set of different educational programs the one which is best suited to their children.

11. Working closely with their children's teachers to generate as much insight as possible on how to provide the best education for each child.

There are dozens of variations on each of these approaches to school

community partnership that can be adapted to local situations. The resources listed at the end of this chapter provide some invaluable materials for dealing with the specifics of starting and maintaining these various kinds of efforts. These resources are not recipes for success that can be followed mechanically, but they can save a group that wants to move in a similar direction hundreds of hours of wasted effort. For example, advocacy groups that have been in existence for several years have already analyzed and compiled many laws and regulations that other groups can use. Volunteer programs have assembled hundreds of ways that parents can assist in the school. School systems where parents have the right to choose what type of learning program they will be involved in have documented a great deal of useful experience that can help others who want to try this approach.

Alternative Schools Network (ASN)
2044 West Grenshaw
Chicago, Illinois 60612
(312) 733-0268

"ASN provides a way of sharing common concerns and giving mutual support for alternative schools in the Chicago area. They work in the areas of funding, sharing and gathering resources, and developing ways for alternative schools to function cooperatively." ASH also publishes a monthly newsletter relating information of interest to people involved in and interested in Chicago area alternative schools.

American Friends Service Committee. Report on AFSC Education Roundup, March 1976. Philadelphia: Author 1976. Available from the American Friends Service Committee, Community Relations Division, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102, free.

Conference proceedings which include detailed summaries of each major session--for instance, Monitoring, Parent and Student Organizing, Discipline, and Bilingual-Bicultural Education. Much useful information is contained within this summary of discussions, speeches, and the responses of participants.

Center for New Schools. Planning for a change: A resource catalogue. Chicago: Author, 1973. Available from Center for New Schools, 59 East Van Buren, Suite 1800, Chicago, Illinois 60605, (312) 435-3838, $2.25. Listing of additional publications available on request.

Mimeographed catalogue designed for groups planning new schools or changes within schools. Contains 293 annotated listings of a wide variety of resources including books, reports, films and filmstrips, newsletters, publishers and distributors, as well as groups and individuals who provide technical assistance for new or alternative school programs. (Some entries may be out-of-date.)

Center for the Study of Parent Involvement (CSPI)
2544 Etna Street
Berkeley, California 94704
(415) 848-7150

The Center is a voluntary organization which encourages parent involvement in education through a variety of activities such as conducting conferences, workshops, and institutes with parent leaders which address specific issues and skills needs; and providing direct assistance to those concerned with building parent involvement. The Center cooperates with Humanics Associates (see Resource entry in Chapter 4) in presenting workshops and conferences. CSPI publications include:

Apple Pie. Available from CSPI, Subscriptions are $5 per year, eight issues.

CSPI'S newsletter containing feature articles on issues and topics related to parent involvement; news items reporting related events and information from around the country; and listings of newly published books, articles, and other materials relevant to parent involvement.

Safran, D. Evaluating parent involvement (Issue paper #1). Berkeley: CSPI, 1974. Available from CSPI, $2.50.

Safran argues clearly and convincingly to involve parents in schools as tutors of their own children, as paraprofessional employees in the school program, and as decision makers. There is a short review of the literature on parent involvement with suggestions for further reading.

Safran, D. Preparing teachers for parent involvement (Issue paper #2). Berkeley: CSPI, 1974. Available from CSPI, $2.50.

Paper (with references to additional readings) on why parents should be involved in their children's education and how to train teachers

who will welcome parents and work effectively with parents in the schools.

Adams, D. Parent involvement: Parent development (Issue paper #3). Berkeley: CSPI, 1976. Available from CSPI, $2.50.

Paper discusses the impact that parent involvement has on parents themselves; analyzing eight levels of involvement in Head Start and tracing the effects of this involvement on the parents.

Safran, D. Parent involvement conference model. Berkeley: CSPI, 1976. Available from CSPI, $5.00.

Discusses ways for parent leaders and others to hold their own conferences on the topic of parent involvement in education including a guide to planning, implementing, and evaluating a conference; samples of announcements, forms, and applications; and suggestions on process.

Safran, D. State education agencies and parent involvement: A national survey of state legislation and the policies and perspectives of state departments of education. Berkeley: Humanics Press, 1974. Available from CSPI, $6.50.

Journal of Education Communication. Available from Educational Communication Center, P.O. Box 657, Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, 17011, (717) 761-6620. The Journal is published every other month. Individual subscriptions are $12 per year; individual copies are $2.50.

The Journal deals primarily with issues and problems in educational communication, public relations, and school-community relations. The Journal of January/February 1976, was a special, single-theme issue entitled "Consumer's Guide to Quality Education" containing articles on topics such as how a school board can and should evaluate itself, what is the value of Management by Objective, ways a school system can get closer to parents and citizens, and how to determine the quality of education in a school district.

Lurie, E. How to change the schools: A parents' action handbook on how to right the system. New York: Random House, 1970. Out of print, but many may be available in libraries.

An excellent book, filled with specifics and "how to's" in areas such as school visits, curriculum, school staff, report cards, and student and parent rights. Includes numerous action checklists and samples of written materials.

National Commission on Resources for Youth (NCRY)
36 West 44th Street
New York, New York 10036
(212) 682-3339

Non-profit organization begun in 1967 by a group of educators, social scientists, and business persons to spread knowledge of innovations which utilize young people's talents in ways meaningful to themselves and their communities. NCRY seeks out youth projects, validates their innovativeness, and transmits information concerning these innovations to others across the country. NCRY also develops models such as Youth Tutoring Youth to help others in setting up new and effective projects for youth. NCRY has available both written and audio-visual materials related to their work. Write or call them for a complete list.

Resources for Youth Newsletter. Available from NCRY. Free. Published four times per year.

NCRY's newsletter is an informative source for programs across the country involved in things such as students as interns, student archeology programs, students counseling students, and students working to rebuild neighborhoods.

National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE)
410 Wilde Lake Village Green
Columbia, Maryland 21044
(301) 997-0524

NCCE is a public interest group founded "to rekindle the public interest in education, to increase citizen participation in education decisions, and to redress the balance of control." NCCE is building a network

of parent and community groups who have access to legal contracts and technical assistance, receive NCCE publications, and attend Citizen's Training Institutes to learn practical skills for working with local school systems.

NCCE has produced five twelve-minute slide tape presentations. Slide tapes are available from NCCE for a two-week loan period. $7.00 covers postage and handling. Borrower must pay return postage and insurance. The five slide tapes are:

How to Work with School Officials
Parents and Collective Bargaining
Parents Rights and the Law
How to Raise Money
Build a Power Base

Network: A national school-year newspaper for parents. Available from NCCE. Published monthly during the school year. Subscriptions are $8.00 per year.

This is the official NCCE publication. It includes information on current developments and continuing areas of concern related to parent participation in the public schools. Network also serves as a forum for parents' and citizens' groups reporting on their efforts.

NCCE. Fund raising by parent/citizen groups. Columbia, Md.: Author, 1976. Available from NCCE. $1.75.

A short, practical handbook with chapters on topics such as basic steps in successful fund raising, proposal writing, and how to form a tax exempt organization.

NCCE. Parents organizing to improve schools. Columbia, Md.: Author, 1976. Available from NCCE, $1.50.

A handbook with short, practical chapters on how to organize parents into action-oriented groups, how to get information and work with school people effectively, how to develop leadership within the parents' groups, and how to use funds and find resources.

Schmuck, R.A., Runkel, P.J., & others. Handbook of organization development in schools. Palo Alto: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1972. $12.50.

Detailed analysis of the theory of a school as an organizational system; includes techniques to clarify communication, establish goals, cope with conflicts, and make decisions. Gives practical suggestions for developing these skills as well as extensive reviews of relevant literature on each topic.

See also other Resources:

Bloomenthal, Promoting your cause, p.29

Foster & Back, "A neighborhood school board," p.105

Humanics Associates, p.105

Afram Associates
68-72 East 131st Street
Harlem, New York 10037
(212) 690-7010

Afram Associates is a group of educational consultants who have devoted much of their energies to assisting parent involvement in the education of their children. They have also produced many written materials in this area. Here is a sampling:

Afram. Afram as mirror to Follow Through parents. New York: Author, 1973. Available from Afram, $2.00.

This is a document used to feed back to Follow Through parents their own statements, documents, insights, proverbs, poems, letters, policy statements, evaluations, proposals, and case histories of their work.

Afram. Parent implementation in education: An educational model. New York: Author, 1974. Available from Afram, $1.50.

A description of the model for parent involvement in education developed by Afram Associates. The description includes the underlying philosophy; a program description; explanation of the roles -- teacher, parent, Parent Advisory Committee, field consultants, local stimulator; and materials development and uses.

Afram. Strategies for parent participation. New York: Author, 1970. Available from Afram, $1.00.

Describes specific strategies for parent involvement in education, how they approached it, parent involvement in decision making, and the Afram concept of family.

Afram. What happened in St. Louis: A report of the National Conference of the Follow Through Parent Advisory Committee. New York: Author, 1972. Available from Afram, $1.00.

Describes the process of planning and carrying out a parent conference, including a record of the correspondence involved and topics discussed.

Eastmond, J.M. (Ed.) The Hampton experience: Afram community conference, parent implementation in Follow Through. New York: Afram, 1973. Available from Afram, $2.00.

A booklet describing the conference that brought together families from around the country who were involved in the Follow Through program with the staff of Afram Associates. Included are descriptions of the philosophy behind the conference, the benefits gained from it, the costs involved, the planning procedures. There are also photos, copies of materials from the conference, and numerous letters from participants young and old.

Committee for Citizen Involvement in Public Education. Toward greater citizen participation in public education. Chicago: The Chicago Community Trust, 1975. Available from The Chicago Community Trust, 208 South LaSalle Street, Suite 850, Chicago, Illinois 60604, (312) 372-3356, free.

A report of the Committee for Citizen Involvement in Public Education which "provides a review of past and present efforts of citizen participation in education and presents recommendations and strategies to identify meaningful ways for citizens of Chicago to increase their involvement ...." Included in the report are the questionnaires used to survey students, teachers, principals, citizens, and leaders of organizations. These questionnaires may prove useful to others attempting to gather similar kinds of information.

Institute for Responsive Education (IRE)
704 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02215
(617) 353-3309

"The Institute seeks people, places, projects, and new ideas in participatory education; and to advocate and

assist citizen participation in educational decision making." The Institute also publishes information related to citizen involvement in education:

Citizen Action in Education. Available from IRE.

> *This is IRE's journal, published quarterly. Subscriptions are $5 per year.*

Davies, D. Citizen participation in education: Annotated bibliography. Boston: IRE, 1974. Available from ERIC, Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. $7.50.

Davies, D. (Ed.) Schools where parents make a difference. Boston: IRE, 1976. Available from IRE, $3.95.

> *"This book is for those Americans who want to improve the schools through collaboration between educators and the community they serve. It is for parents, teachers, students, administrators, school board members, and community leaders...." There are eleven case studies of successful efforts, and how-to-do-it ideas and suggestions for the reader.*

Factual politics series. Boston: IRE, 1976. Available from IRE, $14.00 for the five-volume set. Prices for individual volumes listed below.

> *Five books which describe action research techniques for doing fact-finding in the community. Includes how to develop a community organization and find out information relevant to school improvement efforts. The volumes are:*
>
> Burges, B. Facts for a change: Citizen action research for better schools. $5.00.
> Prentice, L. Words, pictures, media: Communication in educational politics. $4.00.
> Burges, B. Facts and figures: A layman's guide to conducting surveys. $3.50.
> Ferriera, J., & Burges, B. Collecting evidence: A layman's guide to participant observation. $2.00.
> Burges, B. You can look it up: Finding educational documents. $2.00.

Sayason, S., & others. The community at the bargaining table. Boston: IRE, 1975. Available from IRE, $3.00.

"Citizens are locked out of the bargaining process which determines a widening scope of education policy. This report proposes five alternative models for community involvement in bargaining."

Jones, P., & Jones, S. Parents unite! The complete guide for shaking up your children's school. Wyden Books, 1976.

Written for parents who want to join with other parents in improving their children's school. Filled with many suggestions for how to: wake up the PTA, raise funds and get grants, investigate school budgets, set goals, establish a school volunteer program, and many more.

Mann, D. Shared control in urban neighborhood schools: An interpretive essay and bibliography. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1973. Available from ERIC Document Reproduction Service, P.O. Box 190, Arlington, Virginia 22210. $6.78 per copy. Ask for document number ED 083 355.

An analysis of published works and some observations on decentralization efforts in the New York City schools "to identify some of the most successful practices which have put administrators and neighborhoods together in shared decision making." Mann focuses in the final section of the article on the principal's role and responsibility in helping the shared control group to succeed.

Ornstein, A.C. Administrative/community organization of metropolitan schools. Phi Delta Kappan, 1973, 54(10), 668-674.

An overview of community control and the decentralization issue with a list of the pros and cons of community control. Ornstein concludes that advocates of community control "are not convincing many school administrators, school board members, and state legislators of its value."

Resources for Joint Involvement in the Learning Program

Barnes, E., Eyman, B., & Engolz, M. B. Teach and reach: Alternative guide to resources for the classroom. Syracuse: Human Policy Press, 1974. Available from the Human Policy Press, P.O. Box 127, University Station, Syracuse, New York 13210, $3.50.

An idea book for teachers and other interested people on new activities, programs, and experiences in classrooms, both regular classrooms and special education. Presents program ideas organized around topics such as community-based activities, affective activities, and issue-centered activities.

Because they care: A resource manual for volunteer programs. Springfield: Illinois State Board of Education. Available from the Illinois Office of Education, 100 North First Street, Springfield, Illinois 62777.

This manual pulls together a tremendous amount of information on and suggestions for orientation and evaluation; various roles for volunteers in the schools; sample forms and check lists; potential problem areas and recommended solutions; and additional resources. The manual is based on numerous concrete examples of working programs in Illinois.

Education Resource Center
3171 North Halsted
Chicago, Illinois 60657
(312) 935-1151

"A Resource Facility where teachers, parents, and others who work with children can both exchange and discover new methods, participate in workshops, and make learning materials."

French, S. (Ed.) SEA Journal 1971-1976. Minneapolis: Minneapolis Public Schools, 1975. Available from Superintendent of Schools, 807 N.E. Broadway, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55413, $2.50.

This journal is a collection of twenty essays written by students, teachers, administrators, and community people who have been involved in the Minneapolis Southeast Alternatives project. Components of the program

include choice of educational modes, community participation in education, a Teacher Center, and teacher training in cooperation with the University of Minnesota.

Hess, H. The third side of the desk. New York: Scribners, 1973. Hardback book, $8.95.

The story of changes in a New York City public school, told by an involved parent. The school changed from "traditional" self-contained classrooms to an "open-corridor" program. Hess gives lots of details of the meetings, conflicts, trials, and tribulations involved in developing such a program within the structure of the public schools.

Marzollo, J., & Lloyd, J. Learning through play. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972. $7.50.

Learning activities for young children and their parents. The book is arranged by topics such as the The Five Senses, Counting and Measuring, Exploring, and Problem Solving. Within each topic are a number of activities to develop specific skills.

Strowder, A. St. Paul Open School (volunteer manual). St. Paul, Minn.: Saint Paul Public Schools. Available from the St. Paul Open School, 97 East Central, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101, (612) 224-9421, $2.50. A list of other similar publications is available.

This booklet contains the forms and other materials developed at the Open School which relate to their volunteer program. Included are letters, information forms, applications, questionnaires, suggestion lists, policy statements, and maps. This material can serve as suggestions and ideas for schools interested in a community volunteer program.

Teacher Curriculum Work Center
1400 East 53rd Street
Chicago, Illinois 60615
(312) 955-1329

The Center is a "place for the ongoing education and support of practicing teachers...to come after school to work together, make classroom materials, exchange

ideas....(The Center is) committed to the use of concrete manipulative materials within the classroom...." The Center sponsors a number of workshops on topics such as mime, marine biology, and printing with vegetables.

Resources for Joint Involvement in Insuring Just and Humane Treatment for Students

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
Midwest Regional Office
407 South Dearborn Street
Chicago, Illinois 60605
(312) 427-2533

AFSC staff are working on various issues related to education in the Chicago area. They are particularly concerned with the rights of parents and students. Two publications available from AFSC which are directly relevant to rights and advocacy work are:

AFSC. Chicago's schools: A handbook for students and their parents on their rights. Chicago: AFSC, 1976. Available from AFSC, $2.30.

"This handbook is an effort to bring together the rules, case law and regulations that affect the rights of parents and students in the Chicago public schools." The handbook is divided into sections covering such issues as sex discrimination, bilingual and special education, corporal punishment, and suspensions. There are also lists of boards of education and civil rights agencies.

AFSC. Chicago schools: Suspension. Chicago: Author, 1976. Available from AFSC, $.25.

The newsletter includes general information on suspension and related topics, a list of the number of suspensions in each Chicago public school for 1973-74, and descriptions of alternatives to suspensions which have been developed in Chicago.

Buckley Amendment

This is the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, known as the Buckley Amendment because it was sponsored by Senator James Buckley of New York. This act provides that any school district may be denied federal funds if it does not permit parents to inspect their children's school records, or if the school district allows other persons and agencies to have access to student records without the written consent of the parent. We have listed here some sources for further information on the Buckley Amendment:

Fair Information Practice Staff
524E South Portal Building
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
Washington, D.C. 20201
(202) 245-7488

Governmental agency established to answer questions and investigate complaints in regard to the Buckley Amendment and student records. They will set up conference telephone calls among interested groups to answer questions.

Walden, J.C. Law and the school principal: the Buckley Amendment. National Elementary Principal, May 1975, 54, 71-72.

Discussion of school people's reactions to the law and the significance of the law to schools. Oriented to and written for principals.

Weston, H.B. Privacy in 1975: the Buckley Amendment in context. NASPS Journal, Fall 1975, 13, 18-21.

Brief article discussing the history and implications of the Buckley Amendment and similar legislation concerning privacy rights. Lists thirteen references for more extensive information.

What you need to know about the Educational Privacy Act. Instructor, December 1975, 85, pp. 55-56.

Answers some of the questions most asked by teachers about the Buckley Amendment: What basic rights does the law provide? What records are parents entitled to see and make copies of? Must teachers explain the records to parents?

Children's Defense Fund (CDF) of the Washington Research Project, Inc.
1520 New Hampshire, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 483-1470

CDF is a children's advocacy organization. They have published a series of reports on conditions and issues related to children and their rights. Write to

Washington for a complete list of publications. Two that are directly related to education are:

Children out of school in America. Cambridge: Children's Defense Fund of the Washington Research Project, Inc., 1974. Available from CDF, $4.50.

Report on a national study documenting that over two million school age children in this country are out of school for a wide variety of reasons, including exemptions, truancy, financial barriers, discrimination, exclusion, and disciplinary actions.

School suspensions: Are they helping children? Cambridge: Children's Defense Fund of the Washington Project, Inc., 1976. Available from CDF, $4.50.

Report on a national study of why students are suspended and a discussion of alternatives to suspension.

Inequality in Education. Available from the Center for Law and Education, Harvard University, Larsen Hall, 14 Appian Way, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138. Published quarterly, subscriptions are $6 per year.

This is the journal of the Center for Law and Education, established to protect and advance the legal implications of educational policies, particularly those affecting equality of educational opportunity. The issue of July 1975, "Discipline and Student Rights," is devoted to articles on school suspensions and alternatives to suspension.

Massachusetts Advocacy Center (MAC)
2 Park Square
Boston, Massachusetts 02116
(617) 357-8431

The Center was founded "to address the failure of governmental human service agencies at the state and local levels to carry out their mandated responsibilities, and to maintain accountability to the public." The Center undertakes advocacy, concentrating on the enforcement of existing legislation in the areas of education, child health, juvenile justice, and access to public information. Their publications include:

Making school work: An education handbook for students, parents and professionals. Boston: MAC and Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, 1975. Available from MAC, $3.95.

The question-and-answer format covers topics such as school attendance, discipline, fees, Title I, special education, kindergarten, lunches, tracking, and school records. Of particular value to those outside of Massachusetts are sections on "Teacher-Parent Relations," "Parents Working Together," and "Writing Letters to School Officials."

The way we go to school. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973. Available from MAC, $3.45.

Report on one of the first studies of the exclusion of children from school, exploring the variety of reasons and methods for such exclusion.

Report of the Commission on Truancy and Alternative Education. Chicago: Author, 1975. Available through most university libraries in Illinois.

The Commission was formed in 1974 to study truants in Cook County and Illinois, and their needs; to look at existing alternative education programs for truants; and to develop additional services and programs for children currently unserved.

Student rights and responsibilities. Springfield: Illinois Office of Education. Available from Illinois Office of Education, Office of Student Affairs, 100 North First Street, Springfield, Illinois 62777, (217) 782-9546, free.

A mimeo paper organized by topics such as drug problems, suspensions, school lockers, personal appearance, and school records. For each topic there is a brief explanation of what the student's rights and responsibilities are, with reference to relevant legislation and court decisions. Illinois Office of Education is also working on a handbook on student records which should be available in early 1977.

Your schools. Available from American Friends Service Committee, South Carolina Community Relations Program, 1203 Gervais Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29201, (803) 252-0975. Published quarterly. Free (special issue, $1.00)

This is a newspaper which serves as a format for issues in education. A special issue was published in May 1975 entitled "Alterna[illegible] to Suspension," and includes information on the development of alternative solutions to suspensions, on school discipline, on teacher in-service, on student advocacy, and on resources for further assistance and information.

The Youth Advocacy Project. School and the law: A community manual. Rochester, New York: Author, 1975. Revised edition available after November 30, 1976, from Youth Advocacy Project, 774 West Main Street, Rochester, New York 14611, $2.00.

A manual for students' advocates on how to do advocacy, where to start, where to go for assistance, and what are existing student rights (oriented towards New York state) and responsibilities.

4. SUSTAINING INVOLVEMENT/MODIFYING EFFORTS

It is hard enough to start a joint problem-solving effort, but even harder to keep it going. After the crisis is over, after the first burst of energy has passed, what next? For many efforts, even those that accomplish much in a short time, this is the end.

However, some groups move in just the opposite direction. They maintain their vitality and grow in new directions. They become highly sophisticated and begin to train others to do what they do. They take a hard look at what they are doing and change directions if what they're doing isn't working or if conditions change.

First, we give you a few snapshots of groups that have sustained their work over a long period. Then we list some of the patterns that lie behind their staying power.

Examples

Training Parent Consultants: Urban Education Project

The Urban Education Project is the result of long-term involvement in Los Angeles public schools by individuals concerned with urban education and how it relates to Black children's development. To deepen and sustain parent involvement, they are training seven parents, who are employed by the Urban Education Project, to work in two schools to act as Parent Consultants. They are parents with varied histories of active involvement, chosen by the Advisory Councils and staff of the two schools. Their training combines advice from the project staff with a deep immersion in school activities. One major project of the consultants is to coordinate an extensive parent volunteer program in the schools. Another is to train other parents on issues of parent and student rights.

The Afram Family Conference

Once a year, parents and children from the eight programs across the country assisted by Afram Associates come together for a Family Conference at Afram's farm in upstate New York. They travel from as far away as Michigan and Arkansas in chartered buses. "There is real value in the bus trip -- a time for sharing, singing, reminiscing, speculating about the future." Beginning four to five months in advance, parents work together to plan the conference, arrange transportation, and maintain needed communication;

thus building on skills that prove useful in working with schools.

The whole Afram concept is to strengthen and expand the idea of a "family" from individual families to thinking about all the parents and children involved in improving a specific school as a family, to thinking about all parents and children from across the country working with Afram as a family. Afram stresses that children are members of their families for life and should be viewed as a member of a family first, then as an individual, a student, a child. Schools should serve as places to strengthen these family relationships, not to escape from them.

The Family Conference brings parents and their children together to share experiences, participate in workshops where new ideas are presented, and work together in preparing food and improving the Afram farm. Physical work together is an integral part of the experience -- "sharing land is real sharing." It is important to note that the children are present throughout the conference. Thus when the adults sit down to discuss schools and their children, the subject of their discussions are there -- reinforcing the fact that the children are of prime importance. In addition, the children are given the opportunity to see their parents working and planning on their behalf.

The conference is a time for assessing what has been achieved and what remains to be done. In the conference, Afram is a "mirror, reflecting back to people what they have accomplished and what their concerns are."

Expanding Programs and Opportunities: United Bronx Parents

In 1971, United Bronx Parents found out that federal money was available for a summer lunch program for children in New York City. It was a monumental task to apply for the funds and then feed 100,000 children in the largest city in the country every day. They won a contract for $3.5 million to do it, did it in 1971, and have done it every summer since.

United Bronx also has started high school equivalency classes in their three branch offices, won grants for prevention of drug addiction, and operates two day care centers in the South Bronx. Their most recent major effort has been to establish a University of the People, which trains teachers and local people for professional positions in the community through a combination of formal classes and direct experience in the community.

Patterns and Issues in Sustaining Involvement/Modifying Efforts

1. Programs that sustain the involvement of parents in joint problem-solving constantly develop and encourage new leadership, as in the case of the Urban Education Project. The founders don't fear new leaders but train them in what they know.

2. Groups become increasingly sophisticated and precise in what they do, refining their work based on experience. For example, Advocates for Children of New York found that they could not merely keep a student from being suspended today if the same pressures were likely to cause it to happen again next week. So they began to draw on a wide network of social agencies to help, and started an alternative school for students who absolutely couldn't cope with their existing schools.

3. The group develops materials and procedures that document what they've learned so that others in the organization can benefit, as United Bronx Parents has done so well. Volunteer programs document successful procedures for recruiting and orienting volunteers. Parent groups record and refine their knowledge about the right person to go to in the school system with a complaint about a problem such as broken school windows.

4. The group develops regular mechanisms for renewing motivation, sharing ideas, and assessing what has happened so far. Afram's Family Conference is just such a mechanism.

5. They use objective indicators or outside perspectives

to evaluate their effectiveness. Has the number of parents and teachers who attend our meetings grown? Is the number of suspended students going down? How many parents are volunteering to work in the school, and is this really a cross section of our parents?

6. They broaden the base of involvement beyond the people who always show up for everything. They find ways to pull in people who are normally inactive and help them become more and more deeply involved. Thus, Saint Paul Open School has identified a number of ways that parents can be involved in the learning program, as well as mechanisms for communicating this to parents and other community members.

7. They receive formal recognition for being an integral part of the school's functioning.

8. They broaden the scope of their work into other areas of community concern without undermining the best parts of their existing program. For example, United Bronx Parents have found ways to apply their energies and skills to running the summer lunch program, to operating two day care centers, and to establishing the University of the People, without diminishing their impact in the schools.

9. They develop grantsmanship and fund-raising abilities. They hire paid staff without undercutting the amount of volunteer work that sustains the organization.

10. They develop procedures for sharing what they know both through written materials and through training others.

Resources for Sustaining Involvement/Modifying Efforts

Bentzen, M. M., & Associates. Changing schools: The magic feather principle. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974.

Describes some of the dynamics of school change: what happens and what factors encourage or inhibit a school's ability to accomplish its goals. Also describes an intervention strategy that was developed to help schools utilize their own strengths and resources.

Foster, C. M., & Back, J. A neigborhood school board: Its infancy, its crises, its growth. Education, 1974, 95(2), 145-162.

This article gives an accounting of the experiences at Roosevelt Elementary School in Louisville, Kentucky. It was written by the principal (Foster) and the school counselor (Back). The article traces the birth and growth of the neighborhood school board: getting people involved, establishing legitimacy, evaluating teachers, attending workshops, making decisions, working through the problems.

Humanics Associates
881 Peachtree Street, N.E.
Atlanta, Georgia 30309
(404) 874-3885

"Humanics Associates is a non-profit organization providing training and information services to a variety of educational, community and human service agencies. Since 1969, Humanics' primary efforts have been directed to strengthening parent involvement through inservice training and improved planning activities....Humanics cooperates with the Center for the Study of Parent Involvement (see Resource entry in Chapter 3) in conducting conferences and workshops."

United Bronx Parents. Buen-apetito: The story of the United Bronx Parents summer lunch program, 1971. New York: Author, 1971. Available from United Bronx Parents, 810 East 152nd Street, Bronx, New York 10455, (312) 993-5300, $.50.

A description of how United Bronx Parents became involved in the summer lunch program; how they

managed to carry it out, serving 150,000 lunches daily; and who the people were who made it work.

See also other Resources:

Safran, Parent involvement conference model. .81

NCCE, Parents organizing to improve schools, p.83

Schmuck & Runkel, Handbook of organization development in schools, p.84

Eastmond, The Hampton experience, p.86

FOOTNOTES

1. Center for New Schools. Experience-based urban school community improvement program. Proposal submitted July 30, 1976.

2. Averch, H., et.al. How effective is schooling? A critical review and synthesis of research findings. Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1972.

3. Goodlad, J., Klein, M., et.al. Behind the classroom door. Francestown, New Hampshire: Jones Publishing Co., 1970.

4. Rand Corporation. Federal programs supporting educational change. Santa Monica: Author, 1975.

5. Rand Corporation. Analysis of the school preferred reading program in selected Los Angeles minority schools. Santa Monica: Author, 1976.

6. Inner-city pupils excel as parents help. The Chicago Tribune, September 19, 1976.

7. Taken in part from: Foster, C.M., & Black, J. A neighborhood school board: Its infancy, its crises, its growth. Education, 1974, 95(2), 145-162.

8. Afram Associates. Parent implementation in education: An educational model. New York: Author, 1974.

9. Afram Associates. Action stimulator #276: Afram and parent implementation. New York: Author, 1975.

10. Schools with a difference. Newsweek, April 23, 1971.

11. Center for New Schools. Progress report to the Joyce Foundation: Experience-based urban school community improvement program. Chicago: Author, 1976.

12. United Bronx Parents. How to make a school visit. New York: Author, 1967.

13. Ibid.

14. United Bronx Parents. School evaluation manual by parents and students. New York: Author, 1972.

15. Op.Cit., Foster & Back.

16. Ibid.

17. Op.Cit. United Bronx Parents. School evaluation manual

18. Ibid.

19. Center for New Schools. It works this way for some: Case studies of fifteen schools. Springfield. IL. Illinois Office of Education. 1973 (Some changes made in section to up-date the information.)

20. Strowder, A. St. Paul Open School (volunteer manual). St. Paul: St. Paul Public Schools.

21. Ibid.

22. Taken from Notes from the Workshop Center for Open Education.

23. Ibid.

24. American Friends Service Committee. AFSC Education Program Meeting, March 1976. Philadelphia: AFSC Community Relations Committee, 1976.

25. Ibid.

26. Center for New Schools advocacy training materials. Chicago, Illinois, 1976.